

PRESS RELEASE

Rio Tinto: Get off the Drina!

Over 60.000 citizens oppose Rio Tinto's Jadar proposal in Serbia (RIO.L)

Belgrade/ Serbia, 9 April 2021 - As Rio Tinto gathers for its annual general meeting, a broad coalition comprising locals from the Jadar Valley, experts and NGOs are organising a protest at the Rio Tinto office in Belgrade as well as in Loznica, London and Washington DC. Together they will inform Rio Tinto's shareholders that they will fight and don't need toxic chemicals in their lives!

"Here is our message to Rio Tinto's shareholders: There are things that money cannot buy. Our land, our roots, our home, our heritage are not for sale and neither are our souls. You don't have our permission to mine in Jadar! We will defend this land at the cost of our lives," says Zlatko Kokanovic, vice president of 'Ne Damo Jadar'.

'Ne damo Jadar' [1] is an association of local property owners from the Jadar Valley. It consists of 350 property owners opposed to Rio Tinto's Jadar mine proposal on social, environmental, economic and heritage grounds and the involuntary resettlement that it entails. The 'Rio Tinto: Mars Sa Drine!' (Rio Tinto: Get off the Drina!) movement centers on supporting 'Ne damo Jadar' and unites twenty Serbian organizations. [2] Together they gathered 63,000 signatures against the Jadar mine within the past two months alone [3].

At the protest members of the 'Mars Sa Drine!' (Get off the Drina!) movement and the public will also hand Rio Tinto the 63.000 signatures and send a clear message: there will be red cards for shareholders and suitcases for Rio Tinto to pack their bags because Jadar is not for sale!

The Jadar mine proposal [4] in the Jadar Valley in western Serbia is owned by the anglo-australian mining giant Rio Tinto (RIO.L) via 'Rio Sava exploration'. The company intends to exploit jadarite. It plans to start with the construction of its low-cost and expandable mine in 2022 and to operate by 2026.

The mine proposal has been beleaguered by scandals as well as national, and transnational opposition due to the use of very large amounts of water and toxic chemicals; the destruction of forests; forced resettlement and a potential transboundary impact in the event of a spill. The proposal covers 22 villages and mining is to occur under two riverbeds - the Korenita and Jadar rivers. Both are prone to flooding meaning that there exists a high risk that the tailings will end up in these two rivers, and then escape into the Drina, the Sava, and the Danube rivers.

The project footprint includes the area around Paulje, a Bronze Age archeological site as well as several classified natural monuments. In 2017 the Serbian government and Rio Tinto signed [5] a memorandum of understanding (MOU) which is being withheld from the public; despite claims to transparency [6]. MOU's have a particularly bad taste in Serbia, they are usually associated with corruption at the highest political level.

“We started litigation to anul permits. We asked the EU to confirm that all permits will need to be in accordance with European legislation; this not only regarding the environment but also with regards to the Water Framework Directive, the Mining Waste Directive and associated conditions such as insurance and proper risk and accident assessment. We encouraged our neighbors to assess a potential transboundary impact in view of triggering the Espoo convention on environmental permitting. And just a few days ago we shared a risk assessment with Rio Tinto’s shareholders. But this is just the start,” explains Marijana Petkovic, a member of ‘Ne Damo Jadar.’[7]

“We own land with archaeological remains dating back to the Bronze Age and the area also contains classified natural monuments. Land that is now within the mine’s footprint. How can Rio Tinto’s CEO be serious about making protecting cultural heritage an issue “felt in the hearts and minds”, when at the same time in Serbia Rio Tinto wants to develop a mine that will swallow-up natural monuments and heritage dating back to the 14th century BC?” asks Marijana Petkovic, a member of ‘Ne Damo Jadar.’

Joining the solidarity in Washington will be Bojana Novakovic and youth climate activist Jamie Margolin.

Contact information: Bojana Novakovic for English language inquiries on mobile +1 310 227 1805 and email info@marssadrine.org - For high resolution images of the action in Belgrade, Loznica, London and Washington DC and further campaign material [CLICK HERE](#) [8]. All info will be available on 9 April from 13:00 BST.

ENDNOTE

[1] <https://www.facebook.com/groups/izbori.loznica/> i <https://www.facebook.com/pakt.loznica/videos/150472813631044>

[2] Kreni Promeni, PAKT-Loznica, Odbranimo Reke Stare Planine, Skupština slobodne Srbije, UZUZ , Collective Action Serbia , Fridays for Future Belgrade, Fridays for Future Serbia, Cuvari Vatre, Eko Straza, Pobuna Srbije, Odbranimo šume Fruške gore, Udruženje za zaštitu šuma, Zeleni talas Čačak, Pravo za vodu, Zelena Patrola, Vojvođanska zelena inicijativa, Romani Asvin, Polekol, Hekler

[3] <https://peticije.kreni-promeni.org/petitions/stop-rudniku-litijuma-rio-tinto-mars-sa-drine>

[4] <https://www.riotinto.com/-/media/Content/Documents/Operations/Jadar/RT-Jadar-Fact-sheet-EN.pdf>

[5] <https://www.riotinto.com/news/releases/Jadar-MoU-Serbia-signed>

[6] <https://cordmagazine.com/sector-in-focus/fic/marnie-finlayson-rio-sava-exploration-committed-to-deliver/>

[7] https://issuu.com/stephaniedanielleroth/docs/risk_analysis_rio_tinto_s_jadarite_proposal_serb

[8] <https://www.flickr.com/people/marssadrine/>

ENDS.