

Open letter to Ana Brnabic and Aleksandar Vucic

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Urgent annulment of the Special Purpose Spatial Plan (PPPPN) Jadar is one of the best ways to ensure that Rio Tinto leaves Serbia. This does not mean making promises as part of the election campaign, but that those who are responsible for implementing the PPPPN, ie. the current Government, will immediately start the procedure of its annulment.

The spatial plan, which engraved Rio Tinto on the map of Serbia, was implemented in March 2020. The consequence of the plan is the conversion of land from agricultural to industrial, which drastically limits its use to the inhabitants of the Jadar valley's 19,000 people, which would turn the fertile valley into an industrial zone that will be specially reserved for Rio Tinto.

What does this mean for the inhabitants of the Valley? The changes in the spatial plan are preparing the land for expropriation, where there is a violent confiscation of land and involuntary eviction of the population in the name of public interest. The change in the plan prevents new economic activities such as the development of tourism, shops and the development of the area. This means that landowners can no longer use the land in the same capacity as before, which is catastrophic for farmers, because they think and invest long term.

In the meantime, the motivation for any agricultural activities is lost, because the inevitable result of all this is eviction. One of the consequences is the significant impoverishment of the region.

Farmers in Rosia Montana (Romania) who fought against the gold mine of the Canadian company Gable Resources faced the same problem. When the spatial plan was accepted, residents were no longer allowed to develop new economic activities. Gradually, the shops were closed, the territory was quickly impoverished, and staying proved to be an almost impossible option.

However, the farmers who decided to stay and fight the company by legal means, managed to win. Eugene David, a farmer, who was their leader, said at the time:

"My land guarantees my future and the future of my children. I could get a job at a company and then be fired after a year or two. My land can not fire me. She feeds me. Every time I meet a company, I ask them: what will you do if I refuse to leave? And they never respond. They have answers to complicated questions, but not simple ones. "

Will Serbia have the same success or will it shake hands with foreign investors for profit instead of protecting its citizens? One thing is for sure, if the PPPPN Jadar is

not abolished by urgent procedure, the consequences will be catastrophic, not only for the environmental, but also for our people.

Driven by the recent protests, which threaten to significantly affect the outcome of the upcoming elections, our president and government representatives are trying to "distance themselves" from @RioTinto and transfer responsibility to the previous government. We must not forget that neither the trade agreement between Great Britain and Serbia from 2002, referred to by the General Director of Rio Tinto, nor the Mining Law from 2006, which Prime Minister @AnaBrnabić mentioned as the cause of the problem, had the greatest impact on this project. The biggest impact was the changes in the Mining Law from 2015, where lithium was consolidated as a "resource of strategic interest" and where expropriation in favor of private companies was enabled.

It's needless to say that Vucic led the government in 2015 as prime minister. Vučić had the choice to reject the Rio Tinto project because it would involve mining lithium from a fertile and populated area. This meant that expropriation was possible, but illegal under the previous Mining Act. Instead of protecting the citizens, Vučić chose to revise the law in 2015 in order to adapt it to Rio Tinto.

If Brnabić and Vučić are really so different in relation to the previous government, now is the time to show it. The urgent abolition of the Jadar PPPN and changes to the concept of strategic interest in the Mining Law must be implemented by those who initially implemented these changes, that is SNS.

Ana Brnabic said that she thinks that the abolition of the PPPN plan is "a decision for the future, and I believe that it is smarter, better and fairer to make a decision by the political elite that will lead the country for the next four years." She means – after the elections. Wouldn't it be fairer for the current government to remove all the obstacles it has created, in order to give the citizens a future and a chance?