



Bojana Novaković
email info@marssadrine.org

His Holiness Porfirije
Patriarch of Serbia
The Serbian Patriarchate
Kralja Petra 5
11000 Belgrade, Serbia
Via email: kp@spc.rs & sasinod@spc.rs

Belgrade, 17 March 2022

Your Holiness,

I allow myself to write to you on behalf of 'Mars sa Drine', a network uniting fifteen Serbian NGOs, as well as experts and activists. It supports the work of 'Ne damo Jadar' an association of 350 local property owners. They are opposed to Rio Tinto's Jadar lithium mine proposal on social, environmental, economic and heritage grounds. They also oppose the forced resettlement that the mine entails. A petition has gathered over 293,000 signatures in Serbia and an international petition has gathered 173,000 signatures. You might have also seen the ongoing protests around the country. And among many others, both the Serbia's Royal family and the Academy of Sciences have come out against the Jadar mine proposal. You might have also followed the work of Bishop Grigoriје of Düsseldorf in the defense of Creation. His compassion for the people and nature of Jadar are really powerful.

To mine in the Jadar valley, Rio Tinto needs to purchase all properties under the project footprint. Given that the lithium/boron mine encompasses church properties such as the Church of St. Djordje, a listed monument, Rio Tinto/Rio Sava will have likely contacted you in view of offering money and/ or compensation for the church properties that would be impacted and destroyed by their mine proposal.

There are many local property owners in the Jadar Valley who refuse to surrender their properties to Rio Tinto/Rio Sava. There exist strong and also spiritual reasons for doing so. **We would like to encourage you and the Holy Synod of Bishop's to follow them in refusing to surrender your properties to Rio Tinto and to defend God's Creation.** A church is the symbol of a living community; built by the local community.

We are also worried about a potential impact of the mine on cemeteries. After all, we bury our loved ones until the second coming of Christ. To think that a mining company could disturb or

move those who sleep until their awakening would not only be unimaginable but also totally unacceptable in the Orthodox spirit and tradition.

It is with great alarm that we view the consequences of greed, corruption and the subsequent disregard for God's Creation. Orthodox spirit and tradition holds answers to questions concerning salvation from corruptibility. Those answers lie in cherishing the gifts that God has given us. To commit a crime against the natural world, against those who care for it and produce food to feed our people, is a sin.

According to Holy Scripture, the earth is God's Creation and God placed humans “in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and to guard it” (Genesis 2:15) And indeed “The land itself must be given a rest and not abused” (Leviticus 25:1-7). As stewards of Creation, we are entrusted by God with looking after it. This powerful act is evidenced by the trust God showed us in letting us name the animals, the plants and everything that makes up Creation. We repeat that covenant - that act of naming - when we are baptized before God.

Your holiness, we hope you will receive our letter in the spirit it was written; namely with compassion and with hope that together with the Holy Synod of Bishops you will **consider our letter and its content at your forthcoming synod meeting in view of not surrendering your properties in the Jadar Valley to Rio Tinto and position your Church firmly in support of those who live there and look after Creation with such great care.**

Yours truly,

Bojana Novakovic
Marš sa Drine