

The citizens of Loznica in Serbia, organized a protest in front of the Rio Tinto's premises and demanded an urgent suspension of all activities related to the construction of the jadarite mine and the abandonment of the lithium exploitation project led by the company. Citizens are protesting because they do not know what the ore flotation will look like, how and where the tailings from the mine will be deposited and what impact it will have on the environment, and they express fear that it will be harmful to the environment and health. The protest was organized by the informal citizens' association for the protection of Gornji Jadra and the Podrinje Anti-Corruption Team (PAKT). Miroslav Mijatović from PAKT told Sputnik that this is only the first protest that there will be more of them, because the health of their children is more important than any "artificial economic progress". He states that Rio Tinto came to Serbia with a "long tradition of violating human rights and violating the environment." He estimates that the opening of the mine will close life in Gornji Jadra, that low-skilled jobs will be created, and fertile land will be lost. According to him, the potential danger of an environmental accident is much greater than the local one, and the consequences can be felt within a radius of 150 kilometers, which means that not only Loznica is endangered, but also Šabac and Belgrade. He states that in the past few years, the Faculty of Mining and Geology has earned 100 million and 500 thousand dinars from Rio Tinto, the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering 12 million, the Faculty of Civil Engineering 10, and the Institute of Public Health Belgrade 13.1 million dinars, institutions are auditing all the studies done so far, because the people cannot trust the institutions paid for by Rio Tinto. The most important request of the protest organizers is the holding of a referendum of the citizens on whether they are for or against the mine. "Citizens must be asked whether or not they want a mine and under what conditions," said Mijatović.

Rio Tinto invested half a billion

The mining company, Rio Tinto, whose headquarters are in London, has been present in Serbia since 2007. In July 2017, Rio Tinto signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Serbia on the project for the development of lithium and pine deposits "Jadar", and in the middle of last year it announced that it would start exploiting lithium in four years. According to the plan, a feasibility study for the project should be completed by the end of this year. Rio Tinto has so far invested almost half a million dollars in research. According to "Bloomberg", the estimated reserves of lithium in Serbia are the largest in Europe, and preliminary research suggests that it could be 200 million tons. The American Geological Institute speculates that it is as much as a million tons of lithium.



Serbian citizens protest against lithium exploitation and future Rio Tinto mine near Loznica

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