

**In Donja Bitinja, a village near Strpce, in Kosovo, pipeline laying work was not stopped and households are without drinking water. Work on several hydro-power plants has begun in the municipality of Strpce, where Albanian and Serb residents have been trying to defend their rivers for months. A construction ban has been announced, but no decision has been made yet.**

Representatives of the new Kosovo government announced a temporary halt to construction of hydroelectric power plants throughout Kosovo. They intend to reconsider the documentation approving the construction of several mini-hydro plants.

"We have not had water for three months, not even a drop of water. We are all bottling. Now we have use water from Lepenac River, but it is not clean water, not even cattle should drink it," says Tahir Muamet, a resident of Donja Bitinja.

And the water from the Lepenac River should be directed into pipes and then into turbines to generate electricity. Albanians and Serbs in Bitinja tried to prevent the passage of one of the pipes.

"Freedom of movement must not prohibit anyone. This is the prevention of freedom of movement, a criminal offense," Dragan Ivanovic, commander of the police in Strbac, told the gathering.

After a brief discussion, however, truck passage was enabled. The passage of one pipe, however, will not discourage the inhabitants of Donja Bitinja from continuing to struggle to preserve natural bagpipes.

"When we can fight, we must fight it, when we can't we must do more. A person who doesn't have any support, when the municipality doesn't support you, the police don't support you, then what's more to do," points out Ratko Staletovic from Donje Bitinje.

The general impression is that building permits are issued at the expense of the environment. In Sirinicka parish, investors are building several hydroelectric plants. The risk is that most of the people at the foot of Sar Mountain will be left without drinking water.

"All the people I speak to are eagerly awaiting the information to stop the construction of a mini-hydro power plant on all tributaries along the Lepenac River," said Dobrivoje Stevanovic, a resident of Strpce.

Bitinja residents protest almost daily, drawing attention to the new government. They were visited by representatives of the Ministry of Infrastructure and suggested that they first apply for a suspension of works.

The Ministry of Infrastructure announces that it will analyze the actual situation on the

## Albanians and Serbs are working together to protect the rivers from SHPP

ground, criticizing the decisions of the previous government that allowed the construction of hydroelectric plants without obeying the law.

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