

Due to the constant and extremely high level of air pollution in Bor, the authorities of this eastern Serbian town have filed criminal charges against the managers of the Chinese company which is operating the local copper mine and smelting plant, blaming them for high levels of pollution.

The local population has been staging protests for months, claiming that the pollution levels in the town have risen much higher than allowed by law ever since the Chinese Sijing company took over the RTB Bor mining and smelting complex two years ago. The Serbian government kept 37 percent of the shares, selling the rest to Zijin.

The local istmedia.rs portal said that the charges filed with the Municipal Public Prosecution were signed by Mayor Aleksandar Milikic against the managers of the copper smelting plant.

The Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) has recorded excessive levels of sulphur-dioxide in the center of the town for days. Under the law, the permitted level of sulphur-dioxide is 350 micrograms per cubic meter. SEPA recorded a level of 1,969 micrograms recently, leading it to recommend that the local population remain indoors. SEPA said that the levels of PM10 particles were also very high. The air pollution was so high that people walking outdoors found it hard to breathe and had their eyes water. The highest recently measured pollution level was on August 4 when SEPA reported 3,800 micrograms of sulphur-dioxide per cubic meter.

The pollution levels are alarming enough to bring together the local authorities and the opposition who agree that “an ecological crime against the population” is underway. Zijin officials told Prime Minister Ana Brnabic during the election campaign in June that toxic gases would not be released into the air. Residents of Bor have called a protest for September 19.

Source: rs.n1info.com