

## Macedonia: The Public Prosecutor's Office initiated a pre-trial procedure in the case of a mine Kazandol

The Public Prosecutor's Office for Organized Crime and Corruption opened the pre-investigative procedure in which it seeks additional evidence on the manner in which the concession was issued for the exploitation of the copper mine Kazandol, learns BIRN.

"The Ministry of Internal Affairs was asked to take certain actions and activities in the direction of providing evidence and determining the specific surroundings listed in the criminal complaint in connection with this case. Then the Public Prosecution will decide whether the pre-trial procedure will lead to the opening of an investigation," states prosecution.

A criminal complaint filed at the beginning of January this year refers to the existence of "reasonable suspicion that a group of more than one offenders joined in an illegal manner to allow Sardich MCH to obtain an unlawful acquirement agreement of copper, gold and silver."

The application lists a number of inconsistencies in the implementation of the procedure. For example, the decision to implement the Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment was adopted by the Ministry of Transport on March 13, 2015, almost two weeks after the signing of the Concession Agreement, and the draft report for this strategic evaluation was completed only three days after the decision and was made publicly available on the website of the ministry.

In the criminal complaint, it is stated that the company Sardich MCH has completed geological research in an unrealistic short period of 10 months, which according to the applicant represents a "justified suspicion that Sardich MCH has already had data from previous geological surveys at the site, which can only Geological Institute of Macedonia can have", and that all necessary documents, such as the National Urban Planning Documentation, Strategic Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and Exploitation Study, were made against the Spatial plan of the Republic of Macedonia.

BIRN also announced that the state has the legal basis for termination of the exploitation concession contract because one article of the contract was not respected within the stipulated deadline, but until now the Government has not taken a concrete step in that direction.