

The Rio Tinto Company has not left Serbia and, judging by environmental associations in the country, has not stopped its lithium exploitation project in the Jadar Valley, even though the government's decree from 20th January was supposed to put an end to the company's lithium exploration.

According to Zlatko Kokanović, a resident of Gornje Nedeljice, Rio Tinto has not given up on lithium in Serbia and has no intention of giving up.

"Twenty days ago they bought a house that is not in the mining area but along the motorway route. Their activities were supposed to be stopped by the government decree from 20 January, but the only thing that has been done is the conversion of land from residential to agricultural use again," emphasises Kokanović from the Ne Damo Jadar Association.

He says that on 10 August, the municipal administration issued 45 decrees stipulating the demolition of dilapidated houses and that the Association and the public were only informed about it at the beginning of October.

"We asked the municipal administration to see the decree and all the planning documents, so we can inspect them and determine who authorised the demolition without a building permit, but also to tell us where the waste will be disposed of", Kokanović notes.

The local administration responded that they intend to dispose of the waste on their farmland, which, as he says, cannot be used as a landfill site.

"The inspection did not do its job and we sent a letter to the Ministry of Agriculture to do something about it as there are many agricultural plots devastated and not used for the intended purpose", he notes.

Kokanović adds that he is waiting for an answer and expects the new Serbian government to adopt a proposal for a permanent ban on the exploitation and processing of minerals containing lithium and boron on the territory of the whole of Serbia.

"Only then will the project be finished. When the new government is formed, we will again send a letter in which we are urging for Rio Tinto to leave the country and demanding that no other such company be allowed to operate here", Kokanović underlines, Serbian Monitor writes.