

China's Zijin Mining is polluting a village in southeastern Europe's Serbia without permits, local consent or transparency, an environmental activist group claims.

Bor, in northeastern Serbia, is one of the Balkan country's most polluted cities, according to Just Finance, a Dutch group that advocates for public budgets spent on development and infrastructure finance to contribute to sustainability.

The group said China's Zijin Mining, which runs the city's large-scale copper mining and smelting complex, is one of the many highly polluting Chinese investments undertaken "without the necessary environmental and social due diligence".

"Since 2018, when the new owner of Bor smelter complex, the Chinese-owned Serbia Zijin Copper started its operations, the lives of the citizens in at least five villages in this area of Serbia have been upended," the group said.

In an open letter this March the villagers of Ostrelj said Serbia Zijin Copper and Serbia Zijin Mining are expanding their activities, which threatens their health, private property, and livelihood.

In 2016, Zijin agreed to pump nearly \$1.5 billion into the Serbian copper and gold project and paid \$350 million for 63% of state-run Serbian miner RTB Bor Group.

The villagers are calling on the authorities to stop unauthorised construction and find a solution for residents living between old and new mines and hills of tailings. "When winds blow, the Ostrelj village is coated in toxic dust," Just Finance said.

The villagers claim that the authorities have not developed a master plan that takes into account environmental impact.

Just Finance said an environmental impact assessment for one facility was put out for public consultation after it had already been built, Asia Financial writes.