

Briefaktion zu Serbien Verletzungen des Rechts auf Nahrung durch den Bergbau



Die ostserbische Stadt Bor mit rund 40.000 Einwohner*innen ist seit Jahrzehnten vom Bergbau geprägt. Viele Familien sind auf die Landwirtschaft angewiesen, um ihren Lebensunterhalt zu sichern und ihr Recht auf Nahrung zu verwirklichen. Die Region trägt die Hauptlast der Umweltverschmutzung, die mit den Aktivitäten von Tochterunternehmen des multinationalen Bergbaukonzerns Zijin Mining Group verbunden ist.

Flüsse, die früher die Landwirtschaft ermöglichten, sind heute stark verschmutzt oder wurden umgeleitet, um Platz für Abraumhalden und Bergbauabfälle zu schaffen. Dadurch wird die Lebensmittelproduktion erheblich beeinträchtigt. Bodenuntersuchungen eines staatlichen Instituts ergaben alarmierende Ergebnisse. An 22 der 25 untersuchten Orte wurden krebserregende Stoffe festgestellt.

Schwermetalle wie Arsen, Cadmium, Chrom, Nickel, Blei und Quecksilber lagern sich auf den umliegenden Flächen ab. Die Folgen sind sinkende Bodenfruchtbarkeit, Beeinträchtigungen der Tier- und Pflanzenwelt sowie hohe Gesundheitsrisiken für die Bevölkerung. Damit wird das Recht auf Nahrung der Menschen in Bor ernsthaft gefährdet.

Trotz dieser Befunde wurden die betroffenen Gemeinden weder von der serbischen Regierung noch vom Unternehmen angemessen über die Risiken informiert. Viele Familien sind auf ihre Felder angewiesen, um Nahrung zu erzeugen und Einkommen zu erzielen. Ein Bewohner des nahegelegenen Dorfes Slatina berichtet, dass die Ernten kleiner werden und die Qualität abnimmt. Gleichzeitig fehlen klare Informationen über die Auswirkungen der Verschmutzung auf die landwirtschaftliche Produktion und Lebensmittelsicherheit.

Nach Angaben des serbischen Bergbauministeriums sind fast 90 Prozent des Gebiets von Bor von Explorations- und Abbaurechten für Mineralien erfasst, überwiegend im Besitz ausländischer Unternehmen. Dadurch schrumpfen die landwirtschaftlichen Flächen weiter. Für die lokalen Gemeinden stellt sich deshalb die drängende Frage, ob ihr Land künftig noch gesunde Lebensmittel hervorbringen kann. Die serbische Regierung muss den Schutz der Böden, welche die örtliche Bevölkerung ernähren, gewährleisten.

Bitte unterstützen Sie die Arbeit unserer Partnergruppen. Trennen Sie den beiliegenden Brief ab und senden Sie diesen mit Ihrer Unterschrift und Adresse nach Serbien (Porto: 1,25 €). Zusätzlich können Sie den Briefscannen und an die rechts aufgeführten Adressen digital versenden.



Bitte senden Sie den beigefügten Brief an:

Ministry of Environmental Protection
Mrs Sara Pavkov
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Serbien

Zusätzlich können Sie den Brief scannen oder kopieren und an die aufgeführten Adressen versenden (digital oder per Post):

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Bitte verwenden Sie bei E-mails folgenden Betreff:
Zijin Mining Group: expansion in Slatina village, Bor

Bitte informieren Sie uns, wenn Sie sich an die Regierung von Serbien wenden:
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Fecha

Zijin Mining Group: expansion in Slatina village, Bor

Your Excellency,

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the impact of the mining operations conducted by the subsidiaries of the multinational mining company Zijin Mining Group in Bor, Serbia.

According to the information received, pollution from mining and ore processing spreads through the air, surface water, and groundwater, severely affecting soil fertility, plant and animal life, and causing illness among people exposed to contaminated air, water, and soil. Local communities – predominantly peasants and small-scale farmers who depend on agriculture for their livelihoods – report decreasing yields, both in quantity and quality, significantly affecting their ability to feed themselves and their families. With no viable alternatives available, they are compelled to continue farming under increasingly precarious conditions.

Despite these documented findings, the Government of Serbia and the company have failed to ensure transparent, timely and accessible communication regarding the associated risks faced by communities living in the vicinity of the mines. At present, nearly 90% of Bor’s territory is subject to mineral exploration and exploitation concessions, predominantly held by foreign companies. The remaining 10 per cent – largely consisting of agricultural and forest land – has in part been earmarked for the resettlement of persons displaced by mining expansion, further constraining the land available for agricultural use.

This situation is further entrenched in law. Serbia’s legal framework allows for the permanent reallocation of arable land to mining activities, including the disposal of tailings and other hazardous by-products, constituting a significant derogation from the general principle of safeguarding agricultural land. For communities that depend on land for their livelihoods and food production, this raises serious concerns about the long-term safety, sustainability, and productivity of such land.

Serbia is a State Party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and is therefore obligated under international law to respect, protect, and fulfill the right to food and nutrition of its population, including the population of 40,000 in Bor. By allowing mining operations to continue without ensuring effective protection, remediation, and rehabilitation of affected land and water resources, the Government has failed to comply with its obligations to respect and protect this right.

For nearly 11 years, communities have been awaiting the adoption of a Special Purpose Spatial Plan that would regulate land use. They remain trapped in uncertainty and deprived of the comprehensive impact

assessment that a Strategic Environmental Assessment is intended to provide. Meanwhile, according to the information received, the subsidiaries of the Zijin Mining Group are conducting activities without the required planning documents, permits (including mining, construction, environmental, and waste permits), and impact assessment studies, in breach of national law. The competent authorities have reportedly failed to ensure effective inspection, oversight, and enforcement, including the imposition of adequate penalties. In the absence of these safeguards, impacts on agriculture are neither properly assessed nor mitigated, jeopardizing soil and water resources and, consequently, crop yields, quality, and food safety.

In light of these violations, I respectfully urge you to take the following actions to uphold the human rights to food and nutrition of the people in Bor:

- **Ensure transparency, meaningful communication, and remediation planning:** Establish regular and accessible communication with affected communities on mining-related impacts on agricultural production, including clear information on potential contamination and health risks, the implications for the safety of food grown, consumed, and sold, and **concrete plans and timelines for remediation.** Ensure information is provided in plain language and proactively communicated through channels that reach all affected residents.
- **Develop a comprehensive pedological study to map where farming is safe and where it is not:** Initiate a pedological (soil quality) study designed as a **network of sampling locations** with samples at **multiple depths.** The study should identify (i) areas where agricultural production can safely continue, (ii) areas requiring rehabilitation and remediation, and (iii) areas where agricultural production should be restricted or **permanently prohibited** due to unacceptable risk. The results must be made publicly available and explained in practical terms for peasants.
- **Test agricultural products and support safe production, with participation of affected residents:** Implement and fund periodic, independent testing of agricultural crops (leaves, stems, roots, fruits/vegetables, grasses) and animal products (milk, meat, eggs) in affected communities, prioritizing high-risk areas and vulnerable groups. Publish results promptly, explain them in plain language, and provide practical guidance and training on what can be safely grown (and what should not) in specific areas. All testing and follow-up measures should be carried out with the meaningful participation of concerned citizens.
- **Ensure proper implementation of SEA and EIA:** Ensure that Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) procedures are fully and properly implemented for relevant plans, programmes and projects, including a robust assessment of impacts on agricultural land, food production and community livelihoods. Require that identified risks are effectively prevented and minimized, with enforceable mitigation measures, monitoring, and accountability.
- **It is necessary to initiate a comprehensive, participatory consultation process to enable the prompt adoption of the Spatial Plan for the Special Purpose Area of the Bor–Majdanpek mining basin and immediate preparation and adoption of a resettlement plan for affected communities.** Households that wish to continue farming should be provided with arable agricultural land of comparable quality, and resettlement measures must be designed so they do not shift environmental or land pressures onto other communities or compromise the agricultural land on which they depend.

I thank you for your urgent attention to this matter and look forward to your response and concrete actions to respect and protect the right to food and nutrition of people in Bor in accordance with national and international law.

Sincerely,