



Strasbourg, 4 June 2026



T-PVS/Files(2026)2022-8_comp

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee
46th meeting
Strasbourg, 7-11 December 2026

Bureau of the Standing Committee
17-18 June 2026
Strasbourg

Complaint on stand-by: 2022/08

**Possible negative impact of mining activities in Mountain
Baba (Serbia)**

- COMPLAINANT REPORT -

*Document prepared by
Guardians of the Petrushka Krajina, with the Coalition for Sustainable Mining in Serbia (KORS) and
Let's Protect Jadar and Radjevina, on behalf of Guardians of the Petrushka Krajina*



Name and seat of the authority to which the letter is addressed:

**Council of Europe
Department of Biological Diversity
Bern Convention Secretariat
F-67075, Strasbourg
Ms. Alessandra Sino, Secretary**

Subject: Letter on Complaint No. 2022/08: New Complaint: Possible Negative Impact of Mining Activities on Mount Baba

Dear Ms. Sino,

Regarding the new letter to the Secretariat of the Bern Convention regarding **Complaint No. 2022/08: New Complaint Serbia: Possible Negative Impact of Mining Activities on Mount Baba**, submitted by the Citizens' Association "Guardians of the Petrushka Krajina", with the Citizens' Associations "Coalition for Sustainable Mining in Serbia (KORS)" and "Let's Protect Jadar and Radjevina", on behalf of the Citizens' Association "Guardians of the Petrushka Krajina", we would like to inform you of the following:

To understand the scope of the state of affairs in the Baba Mountain area and the outcome of the years-long struggle, we must, more than anything else, start from the beginning, that is, to proceed in chronological order.

Namely, the first serious obstacle to mining corporations occurred, now long ago, in 2019, at the assemblies of the local communities of the villages of Plana and Lešje, Klačevica and Donja Mutnica. We would like to remind you that in the previous report we helped the Ministry of Mining and Energy to understand and precisely determine where the affected villages are located, as well as the area of the Baba mountain itself. It is not a bad thing to mention again: "**The whole east consists of settlements located in the southern denudation extension of the Grza River (Donja Mutnica, Lešje, Plana, Izvor, Klačevica).**"¹

At these meetings in 2019, Mount Baba was defended. The local communities agreed on one thing: mining corporations are not welcome here. Therefore, they made **local community decisions** that legally went through the system. These decisions consist of 12 (twelve) points that cover all aspects of life in this area. We would like to note that the area of Mount Baba is a seismic area, prone to earthquakes. This is evidenced by the fact that on November 21, 2006, the epicenter of one of the strongest earthquakes was precisely on Mount Baba. Only 4.6 on the Richter scale.

¹ Spatial Plan of the Municipality of Paraćin, page 6

These decisions were adopted, according to the statutes of the local communities, legally. All those present voted against the mining corporations.

These meetings and decisions were made in October 2019. After just a few months, in February 2020, more precisely on 28.02.2020, the then Minister, Mr. Aleksandar Antic (A.A.), granted permission for the exploitation of the aforementioned mining corporations, despite the legally adopted decisions of the affected local communities that they were against mining and their own destruction. However, in June of the same year, more precisely on 17.06.2020, the Public Defender's Office of the Municipality of Paraćin filed **a lawsuit** before the Constitutional Court in Belgrade to annul the final decision of the Ministry of Mining and Energy of 28.02.2020, where, among others, the aforementioned decisions of the local communities are used as evidence. However, to this day, and it has been 6 years since then, there has been no news. Otherwise, case law says that it takes up to 2 years maximum to resolve a dispute.

All of the above applies to the Lešje mine, which began operating in February 2021. On March 12, 2021, the Ministry of Environmental Protection issued **a decision banning exploitation**, which a private company, under the guise of state interest, is appealing. Although in the case of a decision, **an appeal does not postpone the execution of the decision**, in some cases the ban is still postponed. After four months, more precisely on July 30, 2021, the Ministry of Environmental Protection issued a second-instance decision annulling **the decision banning exploitation** of March 12, 2021, which the Ministry itself had issued, and this decision was signed by the former Minister of Environmental Protection, Irena Vujović (I.V.).

After a year, on September 28, 2022, the Ministry of Environmental Protection issues **a second decision banning exploitation**, which the mining company ignores and continues to exploit under the auspices of state interest.

We received all this information and decisions only in 2024, after three years of administrative litigation and countless complaints to the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance. The Commissioner, in his power, issued decisions on fines for failure to obtain information of public importance. In addition, we pointed out the violation of the Aarhus Convention, for which we have sufficient evidence.

We sent requests for inspections several times between 2021 and 2024, both to the Ministry of Mining and the Ministry of Environmental Protection. For some of them, we never received copies of the records, nor answers as to whether they went out into the field.

In August 2023, the residents of the aforementioned villages filed lawsuits for compensation for damages incurred in agriculture. A year later, in 2024, the first cases were filed before the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office in Paraćin. After much testimony and hearings, **the first-instance prosecutor's office brought victory in favor of the people.**

However, the mining company, following the established pattern in previous years, appeals are filed before the second-instance commission of the Higher Court in Jagodina, composed of three judges: Vesna Milojković, Mirjana Stojanović and Olivera Živoradović, where **the lawsuits in favor of the people are reversed in favor of the mining company**. It turns out that the residents of the affected villages in the Baba Mountain area must pay damages and court costs to the mining company.

Namely, the mining company hired **an expert in mining and geology to assess the damage in agriculture**, where the expert stated that "it is ordinary dust that is removed by lightly shaking the plants or is washed away with the first rain." With the reversal of these lawsuits in favor of the mining company, the decision of the Court of Appeal in Belgrade has been awaited for almost a year.

At the end of the presentation on the Lesje mine, I would like to add that never, from the beginning of its operation until the end of the works in 2024, has air pollution or emission particles been measured, as if the meters did not exist. Although now inactive, the shadow of the mine watches over the area, unsanitary, unrecultivated. There is mention of a new highway near the mine, there is fear among the local population that the mining corporation will return to the scene of the crime.

The second mine, the Plana mine, was inactive from 2023 to 2025. This mine was purchased by the local mining company GP Zoran Rakic, which already owns a mine 10 to 15 kilometers from Mount Baba. The Plana mine, although opened 40 years ago and more, without valid documents, permits, or environmental assessment studies, is still operating.

On 23.06.2025, the Ministry of Environmental Protection issued a decision **prohibiting** exploitation by the owner at that time, Vaider Group. However, even this corporation ignores the ban issued by the ministry and continues with exploitation, even detonations. The first houses are about 200 meters away from the mine itself.

After that, we held a press conference at the end of July 2025, where we addressed the legality issues and publicly disclosed that the aforementioned mine did not have a permit, and that the Ministry of Mining and Energy stated that it had never granted a permit for the exploitation of limestone from that location. However, the exploitation continues. Often, transport trucks of the current owner GP Zoran Rakic pass through villages, filled with crushed stone, endangering traffic and locals.

And after multiple requests for an inspection, either mining or environmental, no one responded to the call. We only managed to get the records from 2023, which we requested several times, and only in 2024 did we get them.

As for Krajnji Rid, the residents of the village of Klačevica complain about the detonations and noise, as well as the dust that has covered the fields and crops. All state institutions remain silent about the problems that are only piling up, not being solved.

Finally, I would like to use a critical term that is increasingly mentioned in public discourse, among activists, and that is **corporate fascism**. It is a term that describes a model in which state power and large corporate interests are intertwined to the extent that public policies, legislation, and economic decisions are significantly shaped in accordance with the interests of the most economically powerful actors.

In such conditions, formal democratic institutions remain preserved, but the essential balance of power shifts towards corporate structures, while the role of the state is increasingly reduced to ensuring a regulatory and economic environment that favors capital concentration. As a result of all of the above, public interest, social protection, equality of subjects, and citizens' rights are pushed under the rug in favor of the interests of corporations, in this case, mining corporations.

With respect,
Milos Jovanovic
Guardians of Petrushka Krajina