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[www.inura.org](http://www.inura.org)

**Open Letter of Support for Aleksandar Matković and those who raise their voices against Rio Tinto and lithium mining**  
**From the International Network for Urban Research and Action (INURA)**

INURA is a group of international scholars and experts on social, environmental and economic development. Our members come from more than 150 cities and five continents. We wish to express our deep concern regarding the situation of Aleksandar Matković, a research associate at the Institute of Economic Sciences in Belgrade, and the other researchers, journalists, and activists who are raising their voices against the controversial mining project led by the British-Australian company Rio Tinto.

Matković's critical analysis of plans to mine one of Europe's largest lithium deposits in Serbia, published in [Danas newspaper](#), has resulted in him being subjected to online surveillance, intimidation, and death threats. Rio Tinto's project has sparked widespread public outcry and protests throughout Serbia. Concerns centre on potential ecological devastation in a densely populated agricultural region situated above a significant underground water reservoir. According to a scientific study published in a prominent scientific journal, research drilling by the mining company has already caused significant environmental damage, including water contamination and elevated levels of toxic substances in rivers and soil, posing serious threats to local communities, their livelihoods, and the surrounding ecosystem. [See: *Dorđević, D., Tadić, J.M., Grgur, B., Ristić, R., Sakan, S., Brezjanović, J., Stevanović, V. and Šolaja, B., 2024. The influence of exploration activities of a potential lithium mine to the environment in Western Serbia. Scientific Reports, 14(1), p.17090*].

Matković has received increasingly serious [death threats](#) via his Telegram profile, including threats referencing personal information not publicly available and made near his actual location, suggesting that he has been followed. Additional threats were directed at him online, indicating possible monitoring of his internet activities.

Despite reporting these threats to the police, no action has been taken. Authorities initially denied awareness of his complaint, but under media scrutiny later admitted that they had received Matković's complaint and said they would investigate the perpetrators. However, repression has now extended beyond Aleksandar Matković. A foreign journalist intending to cover his case was dissuaded, and alarming raids were made by police and the Security Intelligence Agency on the homes of Matković's friends and supporters.

Matković's situation is not an isolated case. Journalists working for media agencies N1, Danas, and NovaS have also raised their voices against Rio Tinto and corrupt activities around the project Jadar and are receiving threats. Moreover, ecological activists ([Ne damo Jadar!](#) and other civil associations) have received constant threats and being [arrested by the police during the mass protests](#).

INURA is deeply troubled by the threats facing Aleksandar Matković, his family, friends, and the journalists involved. These incidents represent direct assaults on the fundamental rights of freedom of speech and peaceful assembly. We stand in solidarity with all individuals, media agencies, and civil associations courageously raising valid concerns about the societal impacts and environmental risks associated with Rio Tinto's massive lithium mining project in Serbia.

Yours sincerely,

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