

They build without permits - Rama – We do not bother you

The Government of Albania claims that it has not issued any permit regarding the construction of small hydro power plants (SHPPs) on the Cijevna River, even though several companies are interested in construction of four such facilities.

Although the Albanian government, headed by Edi Rama, has just begun to take into consideration the requirements concerning the construction of small hydro power plants on the Cijevna River, it already knows that the dam that photographers of "Vijesti" photographed yesterday and which does not have permission in its own country, will not affect the flow of the river in Montenegro.

Therefore, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy of Albania informed "Vijesti" that they did not consider it obligatory to notify the Montenegrin colleagues about the works. "A review of the feasibility, work and technical solutions offered by the authors of these projects has no anticipated impact on the reduction of watercourse passing through the territory of Montenegro," is replied to "Vijesti".

In the Albanian part of the Cijevna, works on the construction of at least one small hydro power plant are in progress, of what the team of "Vijesti" became convinced yesterday. Obviously, there was no the friendly attitude of those who were probably in charge of surveillance. Probably - because throughout the whole length of the Cijevna River basin where works are being carried out, it is impossible to get any information about it, as there is no table to provide information.

On the highway, behind the place called Tamara, where one of the dams is being built, the road was covered with tiny stones that were removed by workers who used improvised branch brooms.

The reporters were not given the answer whether the site was blasted or not. There was no signalisation that would inform the drivers if there was an outburst on that part of the road...

Seeing that the press crew was recording works on the Cijevna River, two men from a private vehicle of Albanian registration marks stopped and, in the Albanian language, in an unfriendly tone, asked the "Vijesti" reporters to shut down the cameras.

It was evident that the press teams were not welcome at every place where a journalist and a cameraman stepped out of the official vehicle labeled "Vijesti" and where there were people involved in the execution of the works. They would hold mobile phones and at the next stop, a new vehicle would wait for our team where we noticed that they were looking at us curiously.

According to the information of "Vijesti", the hostile behavior of the contractor is also evident towards the residents of the surrounding villages in the Keljmendi region, where the construction of several small hydro power plants is planned. Sources of "Vijesti" state that due to the riot, some of the residents were also arrested, and among them are those who lost their properties due to the construction of small hydro power plants.

Martina Volf warned about the situation regarding the construction of mini hydro power plants on the Cijevna, speaking at the first European summit on the rivers, held at the end of September in Sarajevo. Wolf, anthropologist and humanitarian worker from Strasbourg, has been living and working in Albania for a decade.

"There are hydro power plants that were constructed before 1990. But a new small hydro power plant has been recently constructed in the place called Selce without the consent and approval of the local residents. One is being built in the place called Tamara, where the Cijevna River has already been 'trapped' in a three-kilometer pipe," said Wolf, declaring the construction of a number of small hydro power plants.

She added that the concessions for small hydro power plants were signed by the local authorities in the place of Koplik, which, according to the 2011 census, has about 3,700 residents. Volf states that none of the residents were consulted, nor did they have information concerning plans for the construction of small hydro power plants on the Cijevna in that part of Albania.

She also said that, pursuant to the data from the Internet, 6 permits were issued for small hydro power plants on the Cijevna and they are planning to build 14.

"Construction of small hydro power plants on the Cijevna must be banned, Volf said".

"Authorities, both local and state, regarding small hydro power plants, manipulate and exert pressure on all citizens who show any form of resistance, she added".

Montenegrin Prime Minister **Duško Marković** said that he will discuss with his Albanian colleague Edi Rama about the Cijevna during the Economic Forum in Budva on October 25th. The state requested information from Albania about small hydro power plants on the Cijevna after the "Vijesti" wrote about that".

There were Montenegrin in Sarajevo but they did not hear the Volf's speech

The European River Summit, where Wolf was talking about projects on the Cijevna, was attended by representatives of several ecological organizations from Montenegro. A few of them, including the Center for the Protection and Study of Birds, informed the public about this knowledge.

The Cijevna River Canyon was declared last year in Montenegro as a natural monument and a protected zone of the second category.