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Projekt HES Kosinj iz perspektive kosinjskoga župnika: otpor potapanju i očuvanje baštine

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Sažetak: Rad donosi svjedočanstvo kosinjskoga župnika Pere Jurčevića o razvoju i aktivnostima otpora projektu HES Kosinj od 2020. do 2026. godine. Na temelju osobnoga sudjelovanja autor prikazuje nezakonitu ekshumaciju na groblju Mance Draga, prosvjede, pravne postupke, javno i medijsko djelovanje te potporu Gospićko-senjske biskupije, raznih stručnjaka i udruga civilnoga društva. Posebno se razmatraju posljedice iseljavanja i potapanja za stanovnike, sakralnu i kulturno-povijesnu baštinu Kosinja. Prikazani su pokušaji uključivanja stručne javnosti, prijedlozi alternativnih energetskih rješenja, djelovanje udruga i medija te ostvarenje projekta spomenika prvomu hrvatskom tiskaru Ambrozu Kacitiću. Rad donosi i duhovnu dimenziju kosinjske borbe protiv HES Kosinj i napora za očuvanje hrvatske baštine u kojoj, prema mišljenju autora, molitva, misne nakane i blagoslov Kosinja zauzimaju iznimno važno mjesto.

Ključne riječi: HES Kosinj, Kosinjska dolina, otpor potapanju, kulturno-povijesna baština, izvlaštenje stanovništva, arheologija, prvi hrvatski tiskar, Kosinjska tiskara, glagoljaštvo

The Kosinj Hydropower System project from the perspective of Kosinj's parish priest: resistance to inundation and heritage preservation

Abstract: This paper presents the testimony of Pero Jurčević, the parish priest of Kosinj, on the development of resistance to the Kosinj Hydropower System project and the activities undertaken as part of that resistance between 2020 and 2026. Drawing on his personal involvement, the author describes the unlawful exhumation at Mance Draga cemetery, protests, legal proceedings, public and media activities, and support from the Diocese of Gospić-Senj, various experts and civil society associations. Particular attention is given to the consequences of relocation and inundation for the inhabitants of Kosinj and its religious, cultural and historical heritage. The paper describes attempts to engage the expert community, proposals for alternative energy solutions, the work of associations and the media, and the

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completion of the project to erect a monument to the first Croatian printer, Ambroz Kacitić. It also presents the spiritual dimension of Kosinj's struggle against the Kosinj Hydropower System and of efforts to preserve Croatian heritage. In the author's view, prayer, Mass intentions and the blessing of Kosinj occupy an exceptionally important place within this spiritual dimension.

Keywords: Kosinj Hydropower System, Kosinj Valley, resistance to inundation, cultural and historical heritage, expropriation of residents' property, archaeology, first Croatian printer, Kosinj Printing House, Glagolitism

INTRODUCTION

This paper presents a chronology of events relating to resistance in Kosinj to the Kosinj Hydropower System project, that is, the construction of a reservoir and the inundation of Gornji Kosinj and Mlakva. When we saw how activities and works were being carried out at the very outset, we considered them unlawful or at least inhumane. It was immediately clear to us that the entire project would proceed in the same manner, regardless of its subsequent designation as a strategic state project.[1]

The late electrical engineer Branimir Pinčić played an important role in this. He visited Kosinj several times, and we also met in Otočac. His views and research also received media coverage.[2] He had been challenging the project long before we in Kosinj began our activities. He also worked closely with the late Bishop Mile Bogović, PhD. Bishop Bogović opposed the project and questioned why this particular reservoir had to be built and whether there was an alternative that would avoid the relocation of residents while still generating the electricity required.

Pinčić proposed an alternative system involving several smaller hydropower plants, with water collected in smaller retention basins in uninhabited fields so that houses would not be inundated. The water would then be channelled towards Senj via the Markov ponor sinkhole in Donji Kosinj. Such a solution would, however, require modifications to the existing plant to make better use of the hydropower potential.[3]

[1] Plenković, 2021. https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2021_07_86_1590.html (accessed 12 October 2026).

[2] "The entire Croatian public should be appalled by the possibility that, instead of the promised increase in electricity generation of 320 GWh—the sole reason why the erasure of history and the present is being permitted despite protests by residents, the Church, civil society and the academic community—the new reservoir will bring only a ghostly sight: half-submerged Kosinj hamlets emerging year after year as a reminder of culturicide that did not even pay off." Tripalo, 2022. https://www.glas-koncila.hr/otkrica-inzenjera-branimir-pincic-hidroelektrana-u-kosinju-ne-ce-povecati-proizvodnju-nego-rizik-od-poplava-i-probleme-s-vodoopskrbom/ (accessed 27 September 2026).

[3] "Of the possible options considered for extending the Senj Hydropower System with either the Kosinj or the Švica hydropower plant, the latter has advantages. The extension option involving the Kosinj reservoir and hydropower plant will worsen water quality for water supply compared with the present situation." Pinčić, 2021, p. 7. "Particular attention must be paid to the argument that construction of the Kosinj reservoir will prevent floods and thereby protect the Kosinj area from periodic flooding. The preceding discussion makes it clear that, even now, if the correct hydraulic engineering measures were implemented, there would be no harmful consequences from flooding, that is, no flooding of residential buildings at all. The question is why the historic village of Gornji Kosinj should be permanently submerged, indeed obliterated, along with around 2,000 ha of mainly agricultural land, some one hundred family houses and farm buildings, schools, churches and cemeteries, in order to build a system that will not guarantee flood protection and may generate worse floods than at present. Clearly, the initial argument is absurd." Pinčić, 2021, p. 9.

The proposal also involved operating the plant in pumped-storage mode: when there was surplus energy, water would be pumped back into the reservoirs, and when energy was in short supply, the water in those reservoirs would be used again. Other natural springs could also be connected to such a system. There was also discussion of integrating it with solar and wind power plants. An important consideration was the stability of the hydropower potential that a pumped-storage hydropower plant could provide. Yet no one at HEP, in the ministries or in the Government of the Republic of Croatia was willing to give Pinčić's proposal a serious hearing and examine it.

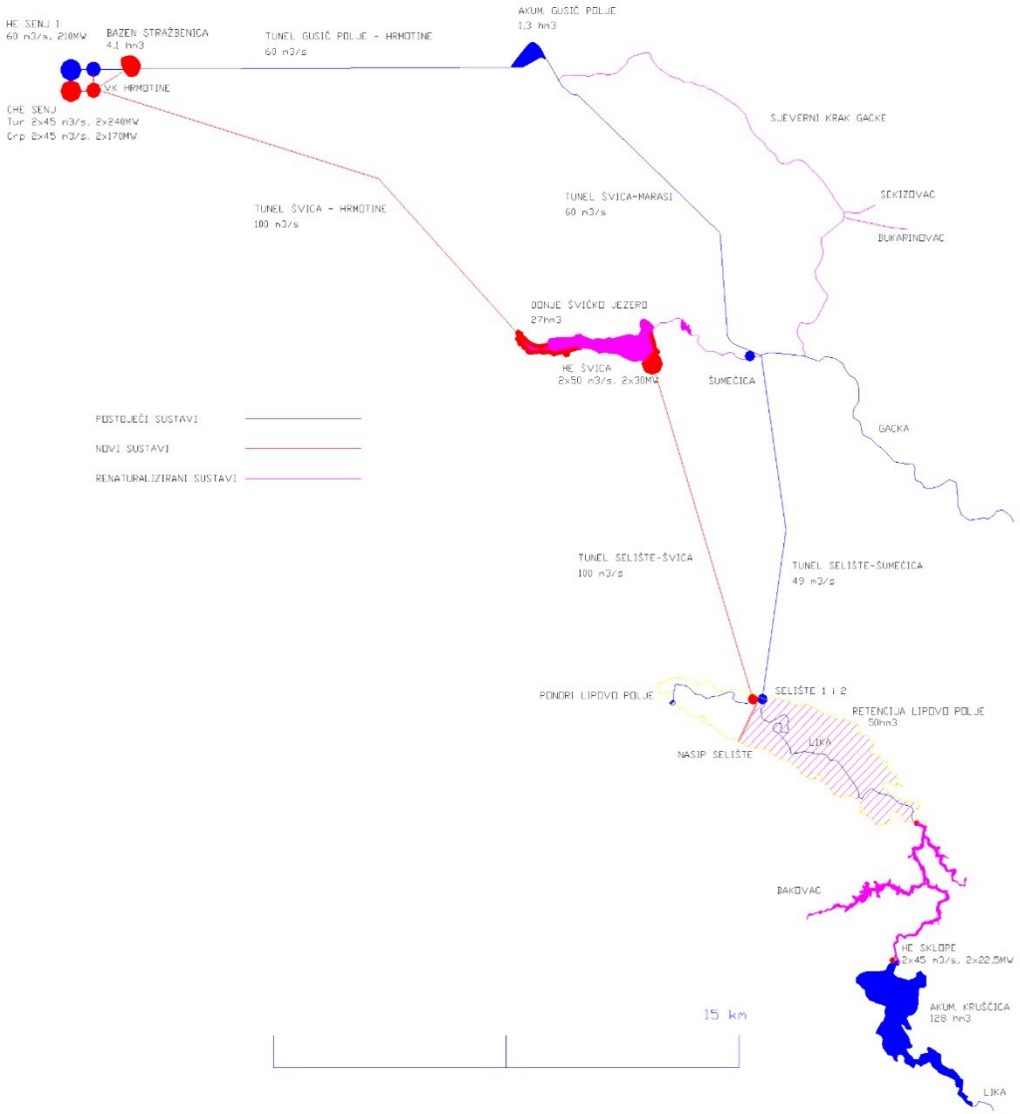


Figure 1. Schematic representation of the alternative project proposed by engineer Branimir Pinčić[4]

[4] Pinčić, 2021, p. 6.

For all these reasons, ever since the Kosinj Hydropower System project was announced, people in Kosinj had discussed ideas about the need to involve local residents, but it was unclear how to act. Over time, the people of Kosinj realised that they had to remain constantly active and draw attention to new developments so that the issue would enter the public domain and remain there. Legal assistance was later sought, along with support from academic and professional circles, environmental associations and well-known individuals. The issue could not remain confined to Kosinj. We needed to find people who would examine the project and show why we considered it misguided and financially unviable, and why the figures in the studies, for example those concerning water volumes and electricity generation, were inflated.

WHAT IS CONTENTIOUS ABOUT THE KOSINJ HYDROPOWER SYSTEM PROJECT

First and foremost, the issue is how those in positions of power and the authorities treat people. When work began, residents should have been brought together, informed, given an explanation of the project and engaged in discussion. Representatives of the authorities or HEP never did this. There was only one meeting in Kosinj, but it was not organised by the institutions or HEP; rather, it was organised at the level of a citizens' association and in connection with the association "Kosinjska dolina", represented by its president, Milan Sigurnjak. At that meeting, an attempt was made to suggest that the municipality or county was behind it, but this was not the case.

Furthermore, when valuations were carried out for expropriation, the valuers went through houses and properties very quickly, literally in a matter of minutes. In such a short time, they could not inspect every room, measure the floor area and establish whether the space had been fitted out. Everything outside the houses, such as wells, cisterns and other structures, also needed to be documented. This cannot be done properly in the way the valuers worked. A great many people complained that, during the cadastral survey preceding the valuations, the registered area of their land had already been reduced or that some of their property had not been registered at all.

Nevertheless, most people accepted the sums offered, since most people from Kosinj were living, and still live, outside Kosinj. That was their personal decision, but the prices were

exceptionally low. Admittedly, some houses were dilapidated or neglected. When an owner received €20,000, €50,000 or €70,000, it seemed at the time that they had done well. It is now apparent that these were very low sums. We discussed this many times at our meetings in Kosinj. We said that this approach would gradually reduce the number of people opposing the project: some would first accept the offer, then the price would be raised for those remaining in the next round, and in this way HEP progressively reduced the number of people who were dissatisfied and willing to protest and respond.



Figure 2. Condition of the county road in Gornji Kosinj, 2024[5]

[5] Mance, 2024. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ntE3rHvvkis (accessed 18 September 2026).

A road was also being built from Kosinjski Bakovac to Kosinj Bridge. Work progressed very slowly. The company GP Krk withdrew halfway through, leaving the road unfinished. It did not seem that everything was proceeding according to a clear HEP plan. The same applies to the road towards the Sklope hydropower plant and the Kruščica reservoir. That road, too, remained unfinished and subsequently became the subject of litigation. During these works, the only county access road from Kosinj Bridge towards Gornji Kosinj was completely destroyed. What does this say about the attitude of the authorities and HEP towards the people who live and work here and commute daily to Gospić, Perušić and Otočac? How are they to visit a doctor, when Kosinj has had no doctor for years? What about children travelling to school from Donji Kosinj to Gornji Kosinj, and so on? For months, we wrote, contacted the media and applied pressure until the gentlemen from the county authorities and HEP finally decided to resurface these 2–3 kilometres of completely destroyed road, the only route from Gornji Kosinj towards the interior of Lika.

Finally, there is the complete disregard for Kosinj's cultural and historical importance. Central to this is the claim that Kosinj was home to the first Croatian printing house, that *Misal po zakonu rimskoga dvora* was printed there and that the first Croatian printer was from Kosinj. Naturally, Kosinj's history did not begin with the printing house. As far as we know, there are around forty archaeological sites in the area, none of which has been systematically investigated. At several sites, HEP paid only for trial excavations, while the necessary rescue archaeological excavations were not carried out. The issue, therefore, is the failure to undertake the necessary rescue excavations under the Act on the Protection and Preservation of Cultural Property. During any construction work, if an archaeological site is encountered, the developer must fund rescue archaeological excavations and await their completion (Articles 45 and 46 of the Act on the Protection and Preservation of Cultural Property then in force, Narodne novine 69/1999, as amended). We are speaking of some twenty archaeological sites within the area affected by the Kosinj Hydropower System project, none of which has to date undergone the rescue archaeological excavations required by law.

There is Ban Dvor, also known as Ban Stol, which bears witness to the earlier history of this area and to the Croatian bans. What survives today are the remnants of a rich past. Other important features include Pisani kamen, a first-century water-management monument preserved "in situ"; *Jela Car*, the largest and probably oldest fir tree in Europe; numerous springs and caves; and the protected Kosinj Bridge.

According to research by Ivan Mance, PhD, one indication of Kosinj's historical importance is its representation on old maps: Kosinj appears on around 225 maps dating from the sixteenth to the late nineteenth century. Neither the Government of the Republic of Croatia nor HEP paid any attention to these aspects at the outset, nor do they today. Active involvement in the entire process was therefore necessary, and the author of this paper came to act as a kind of leader and organiser of this resistance and of all the activities undertaken by Kosinj's residents.

AN ANONYMOUS LETTER TO BISHOP ZDENKO KRIŽIĆ

It all began with an anonymous letter sent in late 2020 to the then Bishop of Gospić-Senj, Zdenko Križić. Even today, we do not know who wrote it, but it was clearly someone from Kosinj or someone who cared deeply about it. The letter described the situation and the issues surrounding Kosinj and the Kosinj Hydropower System project at the time, how people felt and why they were suffering.

The letter deeply affected the bishop. In the discussions and enquiries about the situation in Kosinj, the bishop's key question was whether it was true that people did not want to leave Kosinj and opposed the project. On the basis of his initial reaction to the anonymous letter and his question, we decided to collect signatures from people from Kosinj expressing their opposition to the Kosinj Hydropower System project, so that the bishop could see how many people opposed relocation and inundation.

Between 630 and 700 signatures were collected. The signatories included people living in Gornji Kosinj and those who did not live there but owned property in the Gornji Kosinj area. People from Kosinjski Bakovac and Donji Kosinj also signed. All of this was submitted to the bishop, and the petition showed him that this was an exceptionally serious issue and that people truly opposed the project. This became something of a catalyst for later activities and for the bishop's much greater support.

MASS BROADCAST FROM GORNJI KOSINJ AND ŠIME STRIKOMAN

In September 2021, immediately after the celebration of Croatian Martyrs' Day in Udbina, HRT broadcast Mass from Gornji Kosinj. The broadcast was arranged with an editor at HRT.[6] The Mass could be watched throughout Croatia and, from what I was told in the outside broadcast vehicle, viewing figures were very high; more than half a million viewers were mentioned. This was important in initially bringing Kosinj to the attention of the Croatian public, and the parish announcements also addressed the problem of the project.



Figure 3. Šime Strikoman, the 746th Millennium Photograph and the first Kosinj photograph[7]

For the same day, we arranged a visit by the photographer Šime Strikoman,[8] known for his Millennium Photographs promoting places, people and events throughout Croatia. Two such photographs were taken after Mass, and he returned in the following period, ultimately producing four photographs in Kosinj. For the first, people stood in the meadow below the church to form the word "Kosinj" in the Latin script. The second showed the word Kosinj in

[6] "It is assumed that the first book in the Croatian language and Glagolitic script, the so-called Kosinj Missal, was printed in Kosinj in 1483. It is also considered likely that the Glagolitic Breviary was printed in Donji Kosinj in 1491, in the former Pauline monastery. This was the second printed book among the Croats. These areas contain important historical archaeological sites in Croatia." Gornji Kosinj: Misa, prijenos, 2021. https://hrtprikazuje.hrt.hr/hrt1/gornji-kosinj-misa-prijenos-2874608 (accessed 27 September 2026).
[7] Strikoman, 2021. https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=10238789894898392&set=a.10206383530119526 (accessed 27 September 2026).
[8] Šime Strikoman, 2024.

the Glagolitic script. The fourth photograph featured pupils of Anž Frankopan Primary School in Kosinj, photographed in front of their school. This, too, was important in promoting Kosinj. When Strikoman published the photographs, he also spoke about the significance of the place and the problems affecting Kosinj.



Figure 4. Šime Strikoman, the 800th Millennium Photograph and Kosinj in the Glagolitic script[9]

THE FIRST PROTEST – MANCE DRAGA CEMETERY

The first protest was prompted by the inhumane treatment of human remains during the exhumation at Mance Draga cemetery. These were the old cemeteries of Mance Draga 1 and Mance Draga 2, which had gradually been merged into a single cemetery. The first, older cemetery was no longer in use and had only a few grave markers. In the second, more recent cemetery, monuments and crosses were clearly visible. The Municipality of Perušić published a notice that Mance Draga cemetery was to be closed in the Službeni glasnik Ličko-senjske

[9] Strikoman, 2022. https://www.facebook.com/profile/1006092458/search/?q=Kosinj (accessed 27 September 2026).

županije,[10] but did not convene a meeting with residents, who knew nothing about these works. At one point, machinery and activity could be seen at the cemetery in Mance Draga.

To allow the machinery through the narrow access road to the cemetery, a local resident's dry-stone wall was demolished. He was the first to object, and the contractors briefly negotiated with him. The machinery nevertheless reached the cemetery and excavation began on 12 or 13 August 2021. The nearest neighbours heard the work, went there and photographed the machinery and activities. What was troubling was the speed with which the machinery dug through the cemetery. They excavated soil, threw it onto heaps and moved on. This did not in any way look like a proper method of exhuming human remains. We quickly convened a meeting, organised ourselves and tried to stop the works. Responding to our calls, the police came to the site five or six times.

Meanwhile, we discovered that the cemetery was recorded in the cadastre as belonging to the Parish of St Anthony of Padua in Gornji Kosinj. Under the law, the cemeteries should have come under the local authority, in this case the Municipality of Perušić and its responsible municipal services company. However, the transfer of ownership had not been entered in either the land register or the cadastre, a major failing in the Municipality of Perušić's administration. Thus, no one had asked the parish priest of Kosinj, who legally represents the Parish of St Anthony of Padua, the owner of the cemetery, for permission to relocate human remains from it. During our attempts to stop the works and the police visits, a land register extract was presented and the ownership issue explained. Months of wrangling with the Municipality of Perušić followed.

We would go to Mance Draga early in the morning, literally as if we were going to war. Most of the human remains from Mance Draga cemetery are now in Kosinjski Bakovac. Two ossuaries were built for graves without markers, and remains from Mance Draga cemetery were transferred into them. Remains from graves with markers, on the other hand, did not end up in the ossuaries; separate grave plots and appropriate markers had to be provided for them

[10] "Pursuant to the Agreement on financing cemetery expansion for the purpose of relocating human remains from the area of the future Kosinj Hydropower System reservoir, concluded between the Municipality of Perušić and Hrvatska elektroprivreda d.d. on 24 November 2020, and the Agreement on financing the relocation of human remains from the area of the future Kosinj Hydropower System reservoir, concluded between Perušić d.o.o. and Hrvatska elektroprivreda d.d. on 24 November 2020, the cemeteries of Mance Draga 1, Mance Draga 2 and Poljan, owned by the local self-government unit, shall be closed with effect from 1 January 2021, owing to the impossibility of further burials and in order to begin activities to relocate human remains in agreement with the holders of rights to grave plots." Odluka o stavljanju groblja izvan uporabe, 2020, pp. 3144–3145.

in the new cemetery in Kosinjski Bakovac. However, we are not certain that all the remains ended up there, since we subsequently learned that some had been stored in a private garage on a property in Donji Kosinj.



Figure 5. The small chapel and grave of Joso Klobučar, buried in 1976. Source: Ivan Mance, 2011.

The whole case was eventually covered in a programme on RTL. We reported everything to the State Attorney's Office of the Republic of Croatia (DORH), which later dismissed our complaint as unfounded.[11] Yet even today, we do not know what happened to some of the human bones dug up by excavators and left in containers on a property in Donji Kosinj. These are human bones, not the bones of wild animals. We are speaking of our ancestors, of Croats who lived, worked, created and died in Kosinj, of families and people from the immediate Gornji Kosinj area.[12]

[11] "The Municipal State Attorney's Office in Gospić dismissed a complaint alleging the criminal offence of disturbing the peace of the deceased, filed over exhumations at cemeteries in Gornji Kosinj, where the Hydropower System is being built." DORH odbacio prijavu zbog ekshumacije u Kosinju. „Nije povrijeđen mir pokojnika," 2024. https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/dorh-odbacio-prijavu-zbog-ekshumacije-u-kosinju-nije-povrijedjen-mir-pokojnika/2528044.aspx (accessed 27 September 2026).

[12] According to photographs taken in 2011 at the cemetery in Mance Draga and provided to me by Ivan Mance, PhD—thus six years before the last burial—some of the people from Kosinj buried there were: Anka Jurković, née Štajdohar, 1898–1918; M. P., with no discernible burial date; Marica Petrović, house no. 175, buried in 1924; Marija Jurković, née Golik, 1912–1948; Roža Grgurić, née Skender, 1900–1951; Joso Klobučar, 1956–1976; Marija Marinić, née Delač, 1921–1947; and Stjepan and Mande Marinić, with no discernible burial dates.



Figure 6. Mance Draga cemetery after excavation[13]

All this inhumane treatment of the remains of Kosinj's ancestors prompted the first protest, which we organised around All Saints' Day in 2021.[14] We deliberately chose a time when people visit the graves of their loved ones, and it was also a weekend. We invited people from outside Kosinj, including representatives of veterans' and other associations. By our standards, it was a very thoroughly organised event. Speakers took turns on the temporary stage, the most prominent among them being Professor Stanko Uršić, PhD; a representative of a veterans' association from Gospić; Dragan Prša – Paja Genin, a resident of Gornji Kosinj and to this day one of the most active advocates for preserving the Kosinj Valley; the author of this paper; and a representative of the association Eko-Zagreb.

[13] Image reproduced from: Tašev, 2021. https://www.glas-koncila.hr/kosinjani-su-se-usprotivili-potapanju-bude-li-potapanja-crkva-odlazi-zadnja-ostajemo-uz-narod-na-njihovim-ognjistima/ (accessed 18 September 2026).

[14] "Although few in number and elderly, they stood like David against Goliath, opposing the violation of the dignity of the dead, and numerous grievances accumulated over past decades came to the surface. They are dissatisfied because their dead were dug up first, before it had even been decided what would happen to the living… Most people oppose the project to inundate the village and force them to leave their native soil. The Church must stay here until the end; we will be the last to leave. When all the people have gone, we too will leave—that is our clear position, notes Pero Jurčević, the parish priest of Kosinj." Kosinj: 'Bude li potapanja, Crkva odlazi zadnja, ostajemo uz narod na njihovim ognjištima' – Župa sv. Ante – Komin, 2021. https://zupakomin.com/kosinj-bude-li-potapanja-crkva-odlazi-zadnja-ostajemo-uz-narod-na-njihovim-ognjistima/ (accessed 27 September 2026).

The protest was recorded on mobile phones, small cameras and similar devices. Afterwards, we all took candles to the cemetery and prayed for the souls of those whose remains had been relocated so inhumanely. That protest marked the beginning of our public resistance.



Figure 7. The first protest at Mance Draga cemetery, the Reverend Pero Jurčević[15]

Ultimately, we engaged a lawyer in connection with Mance Draga cemetery, and the case went to court precisely because of the statutory period of one hundred years from the last burial. In a final judgment, the High Administrative Court of the Republic of Croatia ruled that this should not have been done in that manner. Yet to this day, despite the judgment, no one has been held morally accountable or liable for a misdemeanour or criminal offence in connection with these actions.[16]

[15] Kosinj: 'Bude li potapanja, Crkva odlazi zadnja, ostajemo uz narod na njihovim ognjištima' – Župa sv. Ante – Komin, 2021. https://zupakomin.com/kosinj-bude-li-potapanja-crkva-odlazi-zadnja-ostajemo-uz-narod-na-njihovim-ognjistima/ (accessed 27 September 2026).
[16] Judgment of the High Administrative Court of the Republic of Croatia, case no. Usoz-102/21-11 of 30 October 2023, *Narodne novine*, no. 143/2023.



Figure 8. Prayer for the dead whose rest was disturbed, Mance Draga cemetery[17]

TWO PROTESTS IN ZAGREB IN 2022

After the protest in Gornji Kosinj, below Mance Draga cemetery, two further protests were organised in Zagreb in 2022, outside two ministries.[18] Although there are few people from Kosinj and we initially received almost no media attention, our Zagreb protests had a considerable impact and attracted fairly substantial media coverage. More importantly, those protests were followed by a turning point in our endeavours and efforts.

At that time, the author of this paper had been elected to the Presbyteral Council of the Diocese of Gospić-Senj. At the first meeting of the newly constituted council, the Kosinj issue was presented in detail, with an emphasis on the need for the diocese to state its position on the project and on everything happening to people in the Kosinj area. A serious and very

[17] Tašev, 2021. https://www.glas-koncila.hr/kosinjani-su-se-usprotivili-potapanju-bude-li-potapanja-crkva-odlazi-zadnja-ostajemo-uz-narod-na-njihovim-ognjistima/ (accessed 18 September 2026).

[18] The first protest outside the Ministry of Justice was organised on 8 April 2022. Prosvjed stanovnika Kosinja pred Ministarstvom pravosuđa, 2022. https://vijesti.hrt.hr/hrvatska/prosvjed-stanovnika-kosinja-pred-ministarstvom-pravosuda-6640779 (accessed 27 September 2026). The second protest was held outside the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development on 28 October 2022. Miletić, 2022. https://www.poslovni.hr/hrvatska/prosvjed-protiv-hes-a-stigao-do-ministarstva-4361120 (accessed 27 September 2026).

fruitful discussion followed, and Bishop Križić decided that the issue would be discussed at a meeting with all the priests. This duly happened. At the next meeting of all the priests of the Diocese of Gospić-Senj, everyone was informed about the Kosinj issue. Bishop Križić then drafted a letter endorsed by almost all the priests of the diocese as well as by the bishop himself. Through this act, the bishop publicly stood alongside the people of Kosinj. He did not declare himself opposed to the project as such, but stated that people must not be treated inhumanely. Their future had to be taken into account and, if they did have to move, they had to be provided with suitable accommodation or compensation.

This had a considerable impact. The statement attracted media attention simply because the bishop had become involved in a problem affecting people in his diocese and had clearly stated his position in public. Resistance among Kosinj's residents subsequently became much more substantial. The bishop's stance gave the parish priest of Kosinj credibility and support in continuing the struggle for the people entrusted to his care.

The difficulty of attracting media attention has already been mentioned in this paper. Initially, almost no one wanted to report on events in Kosinj. The news portal Lika Club covered our activities from the first day and continues to do so. We take this opportunity to thank them sincerely. After Bishop Križić's public intervention (see Appendix 1), media outlets approached us from all sides: television channels, newspapers and news portals. Alongside Lika Club, Nova TV, HRT and RTL, Radio Gospić, Radio Otočac and many other media outlets began reporting on Kosinj.

A SCHOLARLY AND PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCE IN KOSINJ

The first scholarly and professional conference, and therefore a historic one, *The Kosinj Valley – Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, was held on 30 September 2022 at Anž Frankopan Primary School in Gornji Kosinj. It was organised by the Ivo Pilar Institute of Social Sciences, with a range of institutions as co-organisers: the Croatian Institute of History, the Institute of Croatian Language and Linguistics, the Department of Teacher Education Studies in Gospić at the University of Zadar, the State Archives in Gospić, Muzej Like Gospić and

Znanstveno i kulturno društvo Kosinj (see Appendix 2).[19] The conference was held under the patronage of the Diocese of Gospić-Senj, and Bishop Zdenko Križić's presence and opening address[20] lent distinction to this historic scholarly gathering.

The conference featured 36 presentations on Kosinj, with scholars and professionals from various fields taking part. It was exceptionally important at that stage of Kosinj's resistance to the Kosinj Hydropower System project, and remains so today. The only regret is that it was not promoted more widely in the media. It was a historic event for Kosinj, as well as an important scholarly conference on the history of Kosinj, Lika and Croatia, and greater efforts should have been made to secure media coverage. Four years later, in 2026, a second scholarly and professional conference, *Kosinjska dolina – školstvo, jezik, baština*, was held in Kosinj to mark the 200th anniversary of schooling in the area. Its principal organiser was the Croatian Institute of History.[21]

A DEBATE AT MATICA HRVATSKA

The media response soon prompted Matica hrvatska to contact us. This was a period when Matica hrvatska regularly organised public debates. They approached us with a proposal for a debate with HEP representatives. We did not hesitate for a second, because public visibility and media coverage of our efforts were exceptionally important to us at the time. Events organised by Matica hrvatska, one of Croatia's oldest cultural institutions, attract excellent media coverage and considerable interest from academic and professional circles. The debate took place on 22 November 2022 at Matica hrvatska in Zagreb.

[19] Znanstveno-stručni skup "Kosinjska dolina—Jučer, danas i sutra", 2022. https://www.pilar.hr/2022/09/znanstveno-strucni-skup-kosinjska-dolina-jucer-danas-i-sutra-30-9-2022/ (accessed 27 September 2026).

[20] "We know that Kosinj was a centre of literacy and culture. The first Croatian books printed in the Glagolitic script were produced here: liturgical missals and breviaries. Here, 'God was praised in seven churches', as the records state… That is Kosinj 'yesterday'. That is Kosinj 'in the past'… Kosinj tomorrow: what can be said about that? What awaits Kosinj tomorrow? What is its future? There are many questions, and we need great prophets to answer them. Perhaps the words of many of today's speakers will have a certain prophetic force in that sense? People of knowledge who use that knowledge for the common good always have something of the prophetic spirit." Govor biskupa Križića na otvaranju znanstveno-stručnog skupa "Kosinjska dolina – jučer, danas i sutra", 2022. https://gospicko-senjska-biskupija.hr/vijesti/detaljnije/govor-biskupa-krizica-na-otvaranju-znanszveno-strucnog-skupa-kosinjska-doli (accessed 27 September 2026).

[21] Kosinjska dolina – školstvo, jezik, baština, 2026. https://kosinj.hipzg.hr/sadrzaj2/ (accessed 27 September 2026).

HEP was represented by two of its leading figures involved in the project: Vedran Jurić, MSc, then HEP's Director of Capital Investments, and Tomislav Tomić, dipl. ing., the principal person responsible for implementing the Kosinj Hydropower System project on the ground.



Figure 9. The debate at Matica hrvatska, from left to right: Ivan Mance, Pero Jurčević, Branimir Bilić, Vedran Jurić and Tomislav Tomić.[22]



Figure 10. The debate at Matica hrvatska: Vedran Jurić displays the coat of arms of the Republic of Croatia.[23]

[22] Kosinj, 2022. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DvPm6qDP6G8 (accessed 27 September 2026).
[23] Kosinj, 2022. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DvPm6qDP6G8 (accessed 27 September 2026).

Ivan Mance, PhD, and the author of this paper represented Kosinj.

The event was chaired by the well-known HRT presenter Branimir Bilić, which in itself attracted a larger number of interested visitors.[24] The debate subsequently also attracted considerable attention on YouTube.[25]

In the humble opinion of the author of this paper, HEP's representatives were not well prepared, while the audience asked excellent questions. Jurić and Tomić did not convincingly explain or justify the project. At one point, a visibly upset Vedran Jurić waved the Croatian coat of arms, telling the audience, Mance and Jurčević that they were fighting against the coat of arms and the state, which came across as completely absurd. We were fighting for our rights and demanding that the law be followed if the project went ahead. HEP's other representative, Tomić, was visibly uncomfortable with the whole situation. From Kosinj's perspective, the debate went very well, and contact was established with HEP's most important representatives involved in the Kosinj Hydropower System project. At their suggestion, we continued the discussions. Ivan Mance, PhD, took responsibility for these because he was based in Zagreb, but the discussions and contacts did not lead to any concrete agreement or solution. Unfortunately, HEP continued to act as before.

TWO DOCUMENTARIES ABOUT KOSINJ

The HRT documentary *Slučaj Kosinj* was arranged through Ivan Mance, PhD, and Niko Kostanić, then editor-in-chief of HRT's programme Mir i dobro. It was broadcast in two parts in 2023.[26] As far as we know, Niko Kostanić encountered difficulties both over its broadcast and regarding his position at HRT. The subject was clearly sensitive and problematic for both the project and the institutions that had declared it a strategic state interest. The HRT crew filmed in Kosinj for around ten days. The film portrayed the overall situation and everything happening on the ground at the time very well. We thank editor Niko Kostanić, the camera operators, sound technicians and the rest of the crew for this very important documentary, which was ultimately successfully completed and broadcast.

[24] Matica hrvatska—Zbivanja—Tribina sučeljavanja u Matici hrvatskoj: Prijepori oko izgradnje hidrocentrale u Kosinju, 2022. https://www.matica.hr/zbivanja/tribina-suceljavanja-u-matici-hrvatskoj-prijepori-oko-izgradnje-hidrocentrale-u-kosinju-3531/ (accessed 27 September 2026).
[25] Kosinj, 2022. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DvPm6qDP6G8 (accessed 27 September 2026).
[26] Kosinj, 2023. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ajcIvRld_fM (accessed 27 September 2026).

Later that year, another documentary was made, produced by Vida TV. In thirty minutes, the film gave a very good account of Kosinj and the local circumstances surrounding the project, apart from the final section, which discussed fascists and the Ustaše.[27] In the context of the inundation of Kosinj, this was really unnecessary, particularly as many people in the film spoke about how relations between Croats and the Orthodox residents of Mlakva and Lipovo Polje had always been good, even during the Croatian War of Independence.[28]

THE BOOK THE KOSINJ PRINTING HOUSE AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA, ZORAN MILANOVIĆ

There were many moments in our activism when we did not know what to do next. There were few of us and it seemed we had no new ideas, but each time something would happen or someone new would become involved, giving our efforts renewed energy and momentum.

One of the most important contributions to the history of Kosinj was the doctoral[29] and other research undertaken by the historian Ivan Mance. He investigated not only the Kosinj Printing House, which gives its name to the book based on his doctorate, but also the much broader history of Kosinj and the historical records concerning it. He spent almost twenty years researching in order to substantiate his thesis about the first printing house in Kosinj with sources and facts, and to show Kosinj's place in Croatian and European history.[30]

After the defence of his doctoral thesis, the book *The Kosinj Printing House* was presented at many venues, with around forty presentations throughout Croatia. This was very demanding but important, and the media covered the presentations. The book was also presented over two days in Vienna, with coverage by local television.

[27] "The people who committed this crime were mostly from here, local people. Across here, in the village of Kosinj, that is where the fascist headquarters of that Ustaša regime were mostly based," says Dušan Bobić in late 2023 in the documentary *Potopljeni*. VIDA, 2023. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30kATQvMaqQ (accessed 27 September 2026).
[28] "I am afraid; I am most afraid of war. I mean, there is a war, but not here where we are. I am afraid of losing my family and my village. I do not like people being killed on either side," says the same Dušan Bobić in 1992 in the documentary *Mir u Kosinjskoj dolini*. Asked by the reporter whether he considers Croatia his country, Dušan Bobić replies: "I do; it is our homeland. Let us have our rights, and there have never been any problems with Serbs in Croatia; just let them live." Kosinj, 2023. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubDmdbhbqVs (accessed 27 September 2026).
[29] Mance, 2023a.
[30] Mance, 2023b.

We constantly considered how to raise our efforts to a higher level. One idea was to reach the President of the Republic of Croatia, Zoran Milanović, speak with him and acquaint him with Kosinj and its problems. Such ideas initially sounded almost impossible: it is easy to have an idea, but difficult to put it into practice. How the meeting with President Milanović came about is described in the following personal account.

In conversation with the parish priest in Plaški, I learned that the president had already visited the town. The parish priest promised to let me know sufficiently early if the president announced another visit to Plaški. That is what happened. About a year after our conversation, the president returned to Plaški at the invitation of the municipal mayor.[31] *Through the mayor, the parish priest of Plaški secured me a place in the presidential programme. I was advised to speak very briefly, as I would not have much time. If I interested the president, the conversation might last longer. I brought him the book The Kosinj Printing House with a lengthy inscription by its author. Since the gift had not been announced, the security service initially prevented me from approaching with the book, but this was eventually resolved. In a minute or two, I told the president everything important about the Kosinj Hydropower System project, the problems facing residents and the historical heritage that might be inundated. I was pleased that I had managed to say everything I had intended. The president became interested and began asking questions: how many people had left, how the works were progressing and what the situation was on the ground. I had the impression that the subject had greatly interested him. He told me it was not easy to oppose such a project. I understood this as a warning that I was, as the saying goes, "playing with fire". He asked where I was from, then we joked a little and concluded our lengthy conversation. I handed the president our gift, the book The Kosinj Printing House.*

The president made no specific promises. He said he would reflect on the matter and speak to his energy adviser to familiarise himself with the issue. Unfortunately, we did not receive the response we had expected, but that is how politics works. Nevertheless, our meeting probably did ultimately bring about another new and exceptionally interesting development.

[31] Predsjednik Milanović sudjelovao na obilježavanju Dana općine Plaški, 2023. https://www.predsjednik.hr/vijesti/predsjednik-milanovic-sudjelovao-na-obiljezavanju-dana-opcine-plaski/ (accessed 27 September 2026).

President Milanović presented the Pope with a replica of *Misal po zakonu rimskoga dvora*,[32] and his office later gave the same book to the Bibliotheca Alexandrina.[33] Since the *First Printed Croatian Book* was printed at the Kosinj Printing House and is central to research on it, and Mance's book analyses the *First Printed Croatian Book* in detail in that context, it is possible that the president or one of his associates came up with the idea of presenting a facsimile of the *First Printed Croatian Book* while reading *The Kosinj Printing House*. Of course, we cannot know this for certain; it is a supposition based on the president's statements[34] and activities after he received the book *The Kosinj Printing House* from Kosinj.



Figure 11. From left to right: Zoran Milanović and Pero Jurčević, Plaški, 2023.

[32] Zorić, 2025. https://www.dnevno.hr/vijesti/milanovica-su-katastrofalno-pripremili-za-papu-nitko-nije-primijetio-sto-je-ispalio-pred-lavom-xiv-3127023/ (accessed 27 September 2026).
[33] Kakva čast za Kosinj: Prvotisak među najvrjednijim knjigama svijeta u Aleksandrijskoj knjižnici, 2026. https://likaclub.net.hr/kakva-cast-za-kosinj-prvotisak-medu-najvrednijim-knjigama-svijeta-u-aleksandrijskoj-knjiznici/ (accessed 27 September 2026).
[34] As an example, we reproduce part of President Milanović's statement to Pope Leo XIV concerning the facsimile of the First Printed Croatian Book he is presenting to him: "So, this is that famous incunabulum, from our perspective. There is still debate as to whether it was printed in the Croatian hinterland, just inland from the coast, at the oldest printing house that existed there, or in Venice." It is quite clear that President Milanović is alluding to Kosinj, which is indeed the oldest Croatian printing house and is geographically situated in the hinterland, close to the Adriatic coast.
Zoran Milanović Facebook, 2025. https://www.facebook.com/reel/1567476304259680 (accessed 12 October 2026). The description of this video on Facebook also contains the following text: "On behalf of Croatia, I presented the Pope with Misal po zakonu rimskoga dvora of 1483, the first Croatian printed book, in the angular Glagolitic script, a monument perhaps greater than the Baška Tablet."

We may suppose that the parish priest of Kosinj's contact with the President of the Republic of Croatia, Zoran Milanović, may have contributed to the very important and successful promotion of Kosinj and its history worldwide. This not only enhanced Kosinj's international importance and profile, but also gave the struggle of its people a new dimension and greater recognition in cultural, academic and media circles.

And *The Kosinj Printing House* ultimately reached the Pope and then the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. We had wondered how to reach the Pope at all, but through Divine Providence this idea, too, was realised very quickly and easily. During a visit to Rome by priests of the Diocese of Gospić-Senj, the book was presented as a gift to Pope Leo XIV.

The book *The Kosinj Printing House* reached the Bibliotheca Alexandrina as a gift from its author, for which the library's director, Professor Ahmed A. Zayed, personally thanked Mance (see Appendix 3).



Figure 12. The Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, with the book The Kosinj Printing House[35]

[35] Kosinj i Kosinjska tiskara, 2025. https://kosinj.com/ (accessed 27 September 2026).

THE PROJECT FOR A BUST OF THE FIRST CROATIAN PRINTER, AMBROZ KACITIĆ

Following the research and the book *The Kosinj Printing House*, we wanted to commemorate these findings permanently and thereby also help, in some way, to raise Kosinj's profile and save it. The idea emerged for a bronze bust of Ambroz Kacitić, a native of Kosinj and the proven first Croatian printer, and for memorial plaques at sites associated with him and the Kosinj Printing House: the site of the former Pauline monastery of St Mary, now the Chapel of St Peter and St Paul in Donji Kosinj; Vukelići in Donji Kosinj, formerly Dubovik, where Ambroz Kacitić came from; and the Chapel of St Vitus in Kosinjski Bakovac, the church to which the original Glagolitic tablets of Anž Frankapan were transferred from the nearby fortress of Kosinj and the precise site of the Kosinj Printing House.

On the eve of the feast of St Peter and St Paul on 29 June 2024, known locally as Petrova, Mance had the idea for the monument. He was coming to Kosinj because his daughter Pavla was to be baptised on the feast day in the Chapel of St Peter and St Paul in Donji Kosinj.[36] As he passed through Vukelići, he thought how good it would be to create a bust of the first Croatian printer. He presented the idea to the author of this paper, and discussions immediately began about the best place to install it.

Vukelići and the grounds of the parish church of St John the Baptist were considered. The parish church grounds would have been a very practical location for the bust, since many people visit and the monument would stand in a well-maintained, enclosed area. However, the church of St John the Baptist did not exist during his lifetime and working life. The historical connection between the precise location and Ambroz Kacitić had to be taken into account, so it was concluded that the most appropriate site was beside the Chapel of St Peter and St Paul. Ambroz was a Pauline monk, and in his time the Pauline monastery of St Mary, founded in 1453, stood on that site.

We moved very quickly to implement the project. We needed to find an academically trained sculptor for the bust and a stonemason for the pedestal. We considered a well-known Zagreb sculptor but soon decided against him because of his connections with HEP and politics. We then thought of the academically trained sculptor Slaven Miličević. His brother Marinko

[36] Thus Pavla Mance, a girl from a Kosinj family living in Zagreb, was baptised by Pero Jurčević, the parish priest of Kosinj, on the feast of St Peter and St Paul in the Chapel of St Peter and St Paul in Kosinj on 29 June 2024, the 49th birthday of her father, Ivan Mance.

Miličević is a priest of the Diocese of Gospić-Senj, and Slaven had worked very successfully with the late Bishop Mile Bogović on the monument to John Paul II beside the Church of Croatian Martyrs in Udbina. We contacted him and quickly reached an agreement. Slaven encouraged us to begin, even though we had nowhere near the necessary funding at that point.

The parish of Kosinj led the project, since we wanted it to be a project of the parishes of Gornji and Donji Kosinj and their parishioners. The Diocese of Gospić-Senj immediately supported it, including with substantial financial assistance. The sculptor recommended a stonemason, and we began collecting donations and sending out numerous requests for support. A great deal of work went into it all, but given its complexity, the project progressed remarkably quickly and successfully.

The main part of the project was completed before the feast of St Peter and St Paul in 2025, and the ceremonial unveiling and blessing of the bust of Ambroz Kacitić took place on the feast day itself, 29 June 2025. Mass was celebrated by Marko Medo, Bishop of Gospić-Senj, with ten priests from Lika concelebrating.[37]



Figure 13. Celebration of Mass at the unveiling and blessing of the bust of Ambroz Kacitić in Kosinj, 2025.

[37] Pušić, 2025. https://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/hrvatski-gutenberg-dobio-spomenik-u-lici-na-otkrivanje-doslo-1500-ljudi-a-misu-mu-slozili-biskup-i-10-svecenika-15600027 (accessed 9 August 2026).

It is important to note that we organised a ceremony of a very high standard for the unveiling, although this was not easy given the site and the absence of any municipal services. The terrain itself is difficult to access, which complicated both the installation of the monument and the organisation of the ceremony. Despite all the obstacles, a stage and sound system were installed, and the event was covered by numerous media outlets.[38] The solemn celebration of Mass and the bishop's blessing of the bust were followed by a cultural and artistic programme. Just before the ceremony began, a fire broke out on the other side of Donji Kosinj and smoke began to spread. Firefighters were deployed, and Canadair aircraft also fought the fire.[39] This happened perhaps half an hour before the unveiling ceremony was due to begin. Thanks to the dedicated firefighters and a favourable wind direction, everything fortunately ended well.



Figure 14. Blessing of the bust, 2025.

[38] "The project attracted a total of 84 media items, divided into three groups: announcement of the project and fundraising—33 items; installation of the monument—18 items; and unveiling of the monument and reactions—33 items." Mance, 2025, p. 256.
[39] "Two Croatian Air Force Canadair CL-415 aircraft have been deployed to the fire at Donji Kosinj, Lika-Senj County." MORH/MoD Croatia HR on [@MORH_OSRH], 2025. https://x.com/MORH_OSRH/status/1939319268807475415 (accessed 12 October 2026).

The monument project is also linked to Ivan Mance's new book *Prvi hrvatski tiskar Broz žakan*.[40] Originally conceived as a small brochure about the entire project for the monument to Ambroz Kacitić, the idea soon developed into a new historical study by Mance, in which he demonstrated the existence of a Pauline monastery in Kosinj and described the life and work of Ambroz Kacitić and the entire project from conception to completion. The book was then presented at several venues, and presentations are being organised throughout 2026. This once again attracted the media and helped draw attention to the importance of Kosinj and the Kosinj Printing House and to the preservation of our Croatian history.



Figure 15. Bust of Ambroz Kacitić



Figure 16. Memorial plaque to Ambroz Kacitić in Vukelići

[40] Mance, 2025.

WHAT NEXT?

As regards the residents and the Kosinj Hydropower System project, the lawyers representing them, out-of-court negotiations and court proceedings are now crucial. This is not merely about individual owners obtaining a better purchase price for their properties, but also about court cases that are important in challenging the project as a whole. As far as is known, there are at least three final judgments, and many more lawsuits. This is currently causing the developer considerable problems. The proceedings also examine whether those responsible for the project hold all the necessary permits, whether they obtained them in time and whether they are still valid or need to be renewed. The recent case of unlawful waste disposal and groundwater and environmental pollution in Gospić could play an important role here. In the opinion of some environmental experts, there are very strong grounds for challenging and potentially overturning the environmental impact study for the Kosinj Hydropower System, a new version of which HEP commissioned in 2017. Since then, the situation has changed drastically, as polluted waters from the Novčica and Lika rivers in Gospić reach the Kosinj Valley. It is therefore legitimate to ask how a new reservoir being filled with so-called forever chemicals might affect environmental change in the Kosinj Valley and, very indirectly, the Gacka Valley, followed by Senj and the islands.

Nor is the situation on the ground working in HEP's favour. Work is progressing very slowly: much has been started and almost nothing completed. Roads are being built but not finished, and the drainage tunnel between Kosinjski Bakovac and Lipovo Polje is also unfinished, despite having been close to completion for quite some time. The developer has encountered difficulties at several points, including as a result of litigation.

The most difficult aspect of the Kosinj situation is that most residents have already had their property expropriated and been paid compensation. Around thirty people or fewer remain in Gornji Kosinj, and perhaps around ten in the Orthodox village of Mlakva. HEP's aim is certainly to relocate everyone as soon as possible so that the project can proceed unhindered. The remaining residents are under great pressure. They are now being offered considerably more compensation than before, simply to persuade them to leave. For years, the media and public discussion have referred to the last Christmas, the last Easter or the last celebration of

St Anne's feast in Kosinj.[41] Yet despite all this, Kosinj endures and its people still refuse to give up.

Completion of the Kosinj Hydropower System project and the relocation of residents would mean the demise of the Kosinj Valley as a whole. Kosinjski Bakovac, with perhaps sixty residents or fewer, cannot sustain the entire area on its own. Nor can Donji Kosinj, with approximately 300 residents, many of them elderly, survive in the long term without the other settlements. There are very few young families. Such a situation is unsustainable and, unfortunately, opens the way to possible future projects to inundate Donji Kosinj as well, and thus the entire Kosinj Valley. Nevertheless, what the author of this paper has said from the very beginning is that God has the final word. We believe that God's blessing and help have been present in everything we have undertaken. On our own, we could not have achieved so much or persevered for so long. We are now entering the seventh year of this struggle, yet Kosinj endures and its people still refuse to give up.

On a personal level, these past six or seven years have involved many ups and downs, considerable physical and mental strain, and great exhaustion. Eventually, I also developed Crohn's disease and barely survived the operations. According to the doctors, stress played a major role. After the operation and during my recovery, the messages were clear: *you will never return to Kosinj.* My answer was even clearer: *when I return, we will have a drink together, and it will be on me.* And I did return. Pressure, messages and certain threats were directed not only at me personally, but also at other people important to Kosinj's struggle.

What are my plans now? I seek neither fame nor to prolong this story. I became involved for the sake of these people, my parishioners. When the issue is resolved one way or another, I will feel spiritually fulfilled. Until then, I place everything in God's hands because, I repeat, God has the final word.

[41] As early as 2020, Jutarnji list was announcing the last Christmas in Kosinj. Jutarnji list - Zadnji Božić u Kosinju: Sela, crkve, školu i groblja potopit će jezero, ljudi će morati odseliti, 2020. https://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/zadnji-bozic-u-kosinju-sela-crkve-skolu-i-groblja-potopit-ce-jezero-ljudi-ce-morati-odseliti-15018632 (accessed 12 October 2026).

CONCLUSION

There has truly been a great deal of prayer. Offerings have been made for numerous Mass intentions for a blessing on Kosinj in the face of the Kosinj Hydropower System project. We have blessed Kosinj in various ways. At certain times, we would travel throughout the area with the Blessed Sacrament, praying and giving blessings. We scattered blessed salt around Kosinj and placed blessed medals at various locations, not only in the Kosinj Valley but also along the roads towards Gospić and Otočac. We also received blessed roses from Carmelite sisters, associated with St Thérèse of the Child Jesus, and brought these to Kosinj as well. Priests were praying not only in Kosinj. Since their arrival in Lika, the Carmelite sisters in Gospić have prayed for Kosinj every day. They are a great source of spiritual support to us, as is the Diocese of Gospić-Senj. It is quite certain that many other people, both in and outside Kosinj, are also praying for its survival and preservation. Thus, a great deal has truly been done on the spiritual level, and this is one of the most important parts of this story. Some people who view spiritual life differently, without speaking here of visions, are convinced that Kosinj will never be inundated.

From a priest's perspective, it is inconceivable to achieve anything on the spiritual level without God's help and blessing. Yet it is not enough to pray once and say: *God, now you take care of it.* Everyone must do all they can, while praying and seeking God's help and protection. I believe that without this, we would not have achieved what we have. I speak from personal experience, and I am referring not only to myself but also to the entire Kosinj Valley. People may not know this, but Kosinj has produced many religious vocations, priests and nuns. Many parish priests have also served here, and their prayers and work form part of the spiritual history of this area. Of the eleven medieval churches in the Kosinj area, which also had a Pauline monastery, seven survive today. Among them is the church of St Anthony of Padua, formerly the church of St Jerome, which, as a unique example in Lika's religious history, strongly points to Glagolitism and printing in Kosinj. There is also the Chapel of St Anne, with burial remains dating from the late tenth century, thus from the time of Ban Pribina, who may have exercised his authority as ban from nearby Ban Dvor. These are places where people have prayed for centuries, and that spiritual heritage does not disappear when people leave. Kosinj was a major religious, ecclesiastical, Glagolitic and administrative centre, and thus a historic Croatian centre. That spiritual strength is still present today, even though many people's faith has weakened over time. Perhaps Kosinj's spirituality can still be



felt most strongly at the site of the former Pauline monastery, now the Chapel of St Peter and St Paul in Donji Kosinj and the location of the monument to Ambroz Kacitić. When a person, in their transience and weakness, does what they can and trusts in God, they cannot know in advance when or how something will change, but they can be confident that their prayer and their sincere, dedicated efforts and work will bear fruit.

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APPENDIX 1. LETTER FROM BISHOP ZDENKO KRIŽIĆ TO NOVA TV

GOSPIĆKO-SENJSKA BISKUPIJA
Senjskih žrtava 36
HR - 53000 Gospić
Web: gospicko-senjska-biskupija.hr

DIOECESIS GOSPICIENSIS-SENIENSIS
Tel.: (053) 746-400
Fax: (053) 746-405
E-mail: biskupija-gospic@inet.hr

Br. 322/2022.

Gospić, 11. srpnja 2022.

Predmet: Stav Biskupije o potapanju Kosinja

Katarina Jusić
Nova TV
Remetinečka cesta 139,
10000 Zagreb

Poštovana,

primili smo putem elektroničke pošte Vaš upit u vezi realizacije projekta HES Kosinj, ekshumacije pet groblja i naše podrške mjesnom župniku vlč. Peri Jurčeviću.

Kao biskup nisam stručnjak da bih mogao govoriti s obzirom na isplativost HEP-ovog projekta koji predviđa potapanje jednog važnog povijesnog mjesta s njegovim bogatim kulturnim dobrima, ali nam se samoinicijativno javljaju ljudi koji su stručni na tom području i koji govore da je projekt promašaj a šteta neprocjenjiva. Osim toga u tom području bude dosta vode samo u jednom kratkom periodu kroz godinu, a budući da je tlo jako porozno voda odlazi, tako da u ljetno vrijeme gotovo i rijeka Lika presuši. Stoga nam se nameće pitanje na koje javnost nema jasan odgovor: da li zbilja treba potapati cijeli jedan kraj, s nejasnim posljedicama na okoliš, da bi se proizvelo nešto više električne energije koja se može dobivati na mnoge druge načine?

Na stranu ovaj stručni aspekt opravdanosti ovog projekta o kojem nismo slušali direktna stručna sučeljavanja, iznenađuje nas da se tako olako prihvaća potapanje mnogih arheoloških lokaliteta u tom povijesnom mjestu koji su još neistraženi, a tu je i lokalitet na kojem je sadašnja crkva iz 1693.

Boli nas način na koji se devastiraju groblja i ekshumiraju kosti pokojnika, bez ikakvog osjećaja poštovanja. Prema informacijama župnika sve se radi bagerima i na način na koji se to nigdje ne radi.

Što se tiče naše podrške župniku Jurčeviću ona jest u toliko što stoji uz narod koji je u ogromnom dijelu protiv ovom projektu. Ako se HEP, odnosno, odgovorni za taj projekt, dogovore s narodom, župnik sigurno neće praviti nikakvih problema. Narod se

u svom očaju obratio župniku, odnosno Crkvi, kao posljednjoj slamki spasa. Osim već navedenih problema tu je i poseban problem, kako smo informirani od različitih delegacija koje su iz Kosinja dolazile u biskupiju, u potpuno neadekvatnoj ošteti koja se daje ljudima čija se imovina oduzima i potapa. Svi se ljudi koji su u Kosinju, na jedan ili drugi način, bave poljoprivredom i stočarstvom. Njima se za kvadrat oduzete zemlje daje odšteta od 12 kuna. Što čovjek s tako malim novcem može napraviti? Kuću sebi, na nekom drugom mjestu, napraviti ne može. Nema šansi da si kupi negdje drugdje zemljište da bi mogao nastaviti raditi ono što zna raditi! Istina, gradi se neka zgrada u Perušiću u koju se može smjestiti mali dio obitelji iz Kosinja, ali od čega će oni tamo živjeti? Čim će se baviti? Što će biti s ostalima koji ne žele ili ne mogu naći smještaj u toj zgradi? Oni koji budu smješteni u toj zgradi neće dobiti pravo vlasništva nad stanom koji koriste, već samo pravo doživotnog boravljenja, a njihova obitelj nema pravo nasljedstva iako su oštećeni oduzimanjem nekretnina u Kosinju. Oni tu zgradu već sada nazivaju „Luda kuća". Stoga smatramo da je cijeli ovaj projekt iseljavanja naroda nepravedan prema narodu i tu ne možemo biti neosjetljivi.

GOSPIĆKO-SENJSKA BISKUPIJA
Dioecesis Gospiciensis-Senjensis
GOSPIĆ

+ Zdenko Križić

mons. Zdenko Križić,
biskup gospićko-senjski

APPENDIX 2. POSTER FOR THE FIRST SCHOLARLY AND PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCE IN KOSINJ



APPENDIX 3. LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR OF THE BIBLIOTHECA ALEXANDRINA TO IVAN MANCE, PHD

BIBLIOTHECA ALEXANDRINA
مكتبة الإسكندرية

DL.8/2 11 August 2026
D2/27/1

Dr. Ivan Mance
Zagreb
Croatia
ivan.mance@gmail.com

Dear Dr. Mance,

I would like to express my gratitude for the donation of your valuable book entitled *Kosinjska tiskara*, which will undoubtedly enrich the library collections.

We look forward to welcoming you at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina premises.

With my best wishes and warm regards,

Prof. Ahmed A. Zayed

A. A. Zayed

Director, Bibliotheca Alexandrina

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