



Union of Architects of Serbia
Удружење архитеката Србије

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Belgrade, September 14th, 2026

Mr Jared Kushner

CEO

Affinity Partners

16690 Collins Avenue, Sunny Isles Beach, FL 33160

United States of America

Cc: Mr Chad Mizelle (Affinity Partners), Mr Asher Abehsera (Affinity Global Development)

Reference: Follow-up to our previous letter – Worrying legal developments and human rights violation related to your past project

Dear Mr. Kushner,

In one week, the fourth court hearing of the “Trump Belgrade” trial will take place, during which key witnesses are scheduled to appear. Your company’s decision, announced on December 15th, to withdraw its application¹, appeared to us as wise business judgment. This trial is, to our knowledge, the first trial related to your family’s interests in Europe. Moreover, a minister in office, current Minister of Culture Nikola Selaković, along with three other officials, is sitting at the defense table. This is also a first: nothing similar has ever happened in our country.

In these exceptional circumstances, and in the same spirit as in our previous letter (dated November 18th, 2025²), we consider it our professional duty to write to you again today. As the main body of professionals, experts, and scientists in the field of architecture in our country, we are attached to this form of transparency. We believe that all investors, including past prospects, deserve this level of diligence. And that it is a prerequisite for investors to ensure that their projects are compatible with the rule of law.

Your company’s withdrawal was announced as a matter of “respect for the people of Serbia”, but the consequences of that project are far from settled. In our previous letter, we expressed our professional concern about clear risk-generating misconceptions related to

¹ To our knowledge, the first public announcement was made by *The Wall Street Journal* in this piece: [After Backlash, Jared Kushner Drops Plan to Build a Trump Hotel in Serbia](#)

² The letter and its technical annex are available [here](#).

the General Staff Building Complex and the feasibility of the Trump Hotel Belgrade project. Our assessment was that your project was, and would remain, a financial liability for its investors. The events that followed, unfortunately, further confirmed the conclusions of our assessment.

We are at a critical juncture, both for our country and for your business reputation: we have summarized the most salient events that occurred over the last year into five points. For each of them, your councils can easily find more information online.

- **Public threats following your withdrawal:** Right after your withdrawal was announced, the President of Serbia in person made public threats³ of reprisal, directed to those he considered made the project fail. The President publicly vowed to file criminal complaints against “everyone in the police, the prosecution, and elsewhere” who had contributed to the project’s collapse⁴. Legal experts questioned whether such a blanket threat had any basis in law⁵. In following weeks, the President went further in his provocations of the judiciary, daring prosecutors to indict him, and claiming that he would pardon all of the accused if they did so⁶. Within days the President went further still, accusing the Special Prosecution itself of having sabotaged the agreement⁷. As we explained in our assessment, the project was ill-designed from the start, and it is these fatal flaws that should be avoided in the future. We would have preferred to see signals of learning, self-correction, and improvement, being sent to potential foreign investors and partners.
- **An aggressive and non evidence-based defense:** The three first court hearings were unfortunately very poor on substance. Even before his indictment, Minister Selaković behaved aggressively towards prosecutors. He ignored their summoning on November 28th and arrived with TV crews in front of the prosecutors’ office on December 2nd, and called them “corrupt blockaders” among other insults⁸. During the first court hearing (February 4th), the accused pleaded non-guilty and claimed there was no legal basis for the indictment⁹. During the second court hearing (April 16th), Minister Selaković profusely attacked two key witnesses, accusing them of financial wrongdoings¹⁰. During the third court hearing (June 10th), he accused the trial of being politically motivated and then refused to answer prosecutors’ questions¹¹. We will not comment on the legal substance of the case, but will name what this signals in our view to foreign partners. Instead of showing that Serbia is a functioning business environment, governed by evidence and the rule of law, the

³ See *The Guardian*: [Serbian president threatens reprisals after plans for Belgrade Trump Tower thwarted](#)

⁴ See *Balkan insight*: [News: Serbian President Laments Kushner’s Withdrawal From Project, Threatens Critics](#)

⁵ See *Intellinews*: [President Vucic lashes out after Kushner drops Serbia Trump hotel plan](#)

⁶ See *Danas* (in Serbian): [Vučić: Kada TOK podigne optužnicu protiv mene pomilovaću sve u slučaju Generalštab](#)

⁷ See *RFERL*: [Kushner-Linked Firm Reportedly Drops Belgrade Project Amid Controversy Over Site](#)

⁸ See *Vreme*: [Selaković came to the prosecutor's office after the end of working hours: "They are criminal blockading scum"](#)

⁹ See *Associated Press*: [Serb minister among officials on trial over Kushner-linked real estate project in Belgrade](#)

¹⁰ See *DW in Serbian*: [Optuženik kao tužilac – nastavak suđenja ministru Selakoviću](#)

¹¹ See *Mašina* (in Serbian): [Treće ročište u slučaju "Generalštab"](#)

accused's behavior in previous court hearings turned them into a baroque spectacle.

- **Witness intimidation ahead of the fourth court hearing:** Ever since last April (and the second hearing), the probity of key witnesses was questioned by Minister Selaković. On April 25th, the Higher Public Prosecutor's Office (VJT) initiated criminal proceedings, following a complaint from the Ministry of Culture, against key witness Estela Radonjić Živkov. A few days earlier, agents from the Criminal Police Directorate (under direct control from the Ministry of Interior) had gone to the Republic Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments and confiscated documents related to the restoration of a monastery. Estela Radonjić Živkov and her colleagues from the Republic Institute resisted unlawful orders to strip the General Staff off of its legal protection, and she called them out in public. In early 2026, leaked messages showed Minister Selaković and his co-defendants disparaging her¹², at one point calling her a "serious Ustaša" (a very serious slur) for speaking out¹³. On August 25th, Radonjić Živkov was summoned for a hearing at the Criminal Police Directorate, and she and her legal councils publicly shared their fear that she could be arrested ahead of September 21st. Major professional organizations – including ours – in heritage and architecture brought their support to Radonjić Živkov and called out what they consider is a strategy for witness intimidation ahead of the September 21st court hearing¹⁴. This situation aggravates the previous point: aggressive defense in court is one thing. But having the main defendant's own Ministry file a complaint against a key witness, for what appears to be a clearly fabricated case, in our view further harms Serbia's reputation as a safe business environment.
- **Weakening and intimidation of the judiciary and of cultural institutions:** In the months that followed your withdrawal, the pressure moved from individuals to institutions. A package of judicial reforms, informally known as the "Mrdić laws", was rushed through parliament in January 2026 and it restructured the very prosecutorial body investigating the General Staff case, drawing formal criticism from the European Commission for undermining judicial independence¹⁵. The world of art and culture, whose members were key in resisting the unfortunate unlawfulness of your project, have been subjected to increasing intimidation and oppression over the last years, notably within official institutions¹⁶. Fears that the Republic Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments will be further weakened via, e.g., budget cuts, have been mounting this year¹⁷. This is not the environment where a State

¹² Former deputy director of the Republic Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments (RZZSK), and a key witness in the trial against Culture Minister Nikola Selaković before the Special Department for Organized Crime of the Higher Court in Belgrade.

¹³ See *Serbian Times*: ["SERIOUS USTAŠA": These are the messages Minister Selaković sent via WhatsApp in the General Staff affair, insulting employees who follow the law!](#)

¹⁴ See *Vreme*: [Professional organizations: The authorities are putting pressure on Estela Radonjić Živkov](#)

¹⁵ See *Intellinews*: [European Western Balkans. "Controversial amendments to the key laws on judiciary approved by the MPs"](#)

¹⁶ See this piece in *ARTMargins Online*: ["Chronicles of Repression, Chronicles of Resistance"](#)

¹⁷ See *N1*: [Odmazda vlasti prema Zavodu za zaštitu spomenika: "Brutalni napad sa idejom direktnog gašenja"](#)

responsibly corrects course, but rather the environment of a State that punishes those who protected the law and tried to prevent obvious mistakes in the first place.

- **A still very unpopular project, and a court hearing in the middle of a key election race:** Over the last year, Serbian public opinion has not shifted in the project's favor. A December 2025 poll found that nearly two thirds of respondents opposed the plan, even before Affinity Partners' withdrawal¹⁸, and opposition has only hardened since. Student and civic groups are actively organizing further action ahead of the September 21st court hearing. Furthermore, the hearing will take place in the middle of a key electoral race. After almost two years of protests, the current President called a snap election for October 25th. As we write, the key opposition force to the ruling party will be the "Student List", composed of 250 candidates selected by the student movement, which will run with an exhaustive programme where anti-corruption measures are a central piece. Polls show that these candidates could win the majority in Parliament. The very movement that led the grassroots resistance against the demolition of the General Staff and against your project may soon form a government. Right after your withdrawal, some voices that are close to the current government mentioned on TV that you could reconsider and "come back". It is however clear that there is no window to consider a new bid for the same project (which, as we explained in our previous letter, should not have been considered in the first place).

As we noted last year, Mr Kushner, Serbia, and the Balkans more generally, are full of prime locations where projects can be developed safely, with due process, and with the sustainable future of our peoples at heart. The very fact that the "Trump Belgrade" project was considered at the General Staff location made no sense from a legal and technical point of view. This should not have happened to begin with.

All involved parties, foreign partners and investors included, have the responsibility to pay the closest attention to due diligence, and they all deserve transparency and an operationally safe environment.

We see it as a prerequisite for any form of healthy business relationship, grounded in the respect of human rights and of both domestic and international laws.

Sincerely,

The Union of Architects of Serbia

¹⁸ See this piece in *N1*: ["Poll: Vast majority of Serbians opposed General Staff project ahead of Kushner's withdrawal"](#)