



Press Update

Welcome to the weekly press briefing of the Kosovo Specialist Chambers, where we aim to provide journalists with an update on the latest developments at the court, and the opportunity to ask questions.

In the war crimes case of Hashim Thaçi, Kadri Veseli, Rexhep Selimi and Jakup Krasniqi, the Trial Panel on 30 January permitted a participating victim to disclose their status as a participating victim to a third party. The Panel agreed that the disclosure was necessary and took into consideration that protective measures vis-à-vis the general public were still in place.

On 3 February, the Panel issued a decision finding the testimony of one witness appropriate to be admitted in written form once the witness was available in court for cross-examination. The Panel further authorized the witness to testify via video conference and ordered the Registry to make the necessary arrangements.

The Panel noted that the Defence did not object to the motion and was satisfied that the admission of the witness statement in written form would not cause unfair prejudice to the defence, and would in addition contribute to the expeditiousness of the proceedings as it would reduce the time for direct examination in court from four hours to 45 minutes. The Panel considered that testifying via video conference would be more conducive to the well-being of the witness and at the same time ensure scheduling flexibility which contributes to the expeditiousness of the proceedings.

So far 119 witnesses testified in court in this case.

The next hearing in this case is scheduled on Monday, 10 February starting at 9 in the morning.

In the case of Hashim Thaçi, Bashkim Smakaj, Isni Kilaj, Fadil Fazliu and Hajredin Kuci on alleged influencing of witnesses, the President of the Specialist Chambers, Judge





Ekaterina Trendafilova on 3 February assigned a Court of Appeals Panel after the Pre-Trial judge allowed the Prosecution to appeal four issues concerning the Pre-Trial Judges Decision on the Confirmation of the Indictment in which she confirmed in part the charges against Messieurs Thaci, Smakaj, Kilaj, Fazliu and Kuci. The Prosecution submitted the Pre-Trial Judge mis-interpreted certain elements of the Kosovo Criminal Code. The Appeals Panel consists of Judges Michèle Picard, Emilio Gatti, and Nina Jørgensen.

On 30 January, the Registrar informed of the assignment of Mr. Alexander Admiraal as Specialist Counsel for Mr. Kuci.

In the case of Sabit Januzi, Ismet Bahtijari and Haxhi Shala, the Trial Panel on 29 January admitted one victim in this case to participate in the proceedings. The Panel found that the victim suffered mental harm in form of anxiety from the crimes listed in the indictment. However, the Panel decided that the limited scope of the harm and the advanced stage of the proceedings, where plea hearings have already taken place, do not allow for the full participation of the victim through victims' counsel. Considering the mental harm suffered by the victim, the Panel therefore decided to proceed by deciding on reparations, however symbolic, which should be awarded to the victim in this case. The parties were requested to submit revised versions of their plea agreements, including proposals for reparations to be granted to the victim, by no later than Monday, 3 February 2025. The Panel further scheduled a hearing on 4 February to rule on the plea agreements reached between the Prosecution and the accused.

On 4 February 2025, the Trial Panel in a public hearing approved the plea agreements, in which the accused admitted guilt for two of the three charges confirmed against them by the Pre-Trial Judge. More specifically, the accused admitted guilt to one charge of obstructing official persons in performing official duties, and one charge of intimidation in criminal proceedings. The Prosecution withdrew the third charge, obstructing official persons in performing official duties, by serious threat, on 17 December 2024, as part of the plea agreements.





Each accused admitted that they were part of a group which sought to induce an individual to refrain from giving evidence before the Kosovo Specialist Chambers through the promise of a benefit. In particular, Sabit Januzi and Ismet Bahtijari – acting at the direction of Haxhi Shala – approached this individual at his home on 5 and 12 April 2023, respectively.

In line with the plea agreements, the Trial Panel sentenced Mr. Haxhi Shala to three years imprisonment, and Mr Januzi and Mr. Bahtijari to two years each deducting the time spent in detention since the accused's arrest.

The accused further agreed to pay the total sum of 500 Euros as reparations to the victim admitted to participate in the proceedings.

Public redacted versions of the plea agreements are on the KSC website. A reasoned decision will be issued in due course. The decision has the force of a final judgment and is therefore not subject to appeal.

