



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.

As you may recall, closing statements in the trial of Hashim Thaçi, Kadri Veseli, Rexhep Selimi and Jakup Krasniqi, finished on 18 February. After the closure of the case, the Trial Panel has up to 90 days to carefully consider the evidence and arguments presented and come to a verdict. Should they need more time for their deliberations, these 90 days can be extended.

During their confidential deliberations, judges carefully assess each piece of evidence in light of the entire body of evidence admitted before them at trial. In cases of a trial involving multiple accused, separate findings are to be made for each accused.

Judges are required to exercise their responsibilities fairly, impartially and independently. A finding of guilt shall be reached only if the majority of the Panel is satisfied that a charge has been proved beyond reasonable doubt. All accused are presumed innocent unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

Once the Trial Panel has concluded their deliberations, they will announce the date for the pronouncement of a verdict.

In the case related to the alleged illegal influencing of witnesses involving Hashim Thaçi, Bashkim Smakaj, Isni Kilaj, Fadil Fazliu and Hajredin Kuçi, the Single Trial Judge provided on 19 March the reasoning for his earlier oral order allowing contacts between Mr. Kilaj, Mr. Fazliu, Mr. Smakaj and Mr Kuçi while they are present on the premises of the KSC for the purpose of participating in the trial proceedings against them. Under the conditions of their conditional release, the co-defendants in this case are otherwise not allowed to communicate with one another due to a risk that they might improperly influence prospective Defence witnesses. However, while on the premises of the KSC, the Trial Judge found that they have legitimate and compelling reasons to discuss with one another the ongoing trial and cannot realistically be expected to refrain from communications. The exception also applies to periods when the accused are participating via video conference.

Based on public filings, it is not yet known if any of the Defence teams filed motions for dismissal in this case. Depending on the outcome of any such motions, a Defence Preparation Conference is expected to take place on 1 April.

