



Update

Welcome to the weekly press briefing of the Kosovo Specialist Chambers, where we aim to provide you with an update on the latest developments at the court and a look ahead at next week. This is also an opportunity for journalists to ask a spokesperson of the court any questions they may have.

This week hearings have been taking place in three of the cases before the Kosovo Specialist Chambers.

In the case of Salih Mustafa, earlier this week the Trial Panel heard from a witness, called by the Specialist Prosecutor, who testified with protective measures, including voice and face distortion. The witness testified almost entirely in private session, due to the identifying nature of the evidence. This witness briefly gave evidence in open session concerning the exhumation of a body in Zllash.

The trial hearings in this case will resume on 18 January with the testimony of witness W04485, called by the Specialist Prosecutor's Office.

In the case of Hysni Gucati and Nasim Haradinaj, last week the Defence for Hysni Gucati presented its case. The first witness to be called was the accused, Mr Gucati, who testified for three days. The Panel heard the testimony of five other witnesses, who are members of the KLA War Veterans' Association and journalists.

This week, only one session was held in the case, on Wednesday, 15 December.

The Gucati Defence was authorized by the Panel to conduct further cross-examination of two witnesses called by the Prosecution in October and November. Their cross-examination was limited to material disclosed to the Defence after the end of the Prosecution case. The cross-examination was conducted in private session to protect the identity of witnesses and the security of information.





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At the same session, the Haradinaj Defence opened its case and delivered its opening statement. The Haradinaj defence will start with the presentation of evidence on 11 January 2022, as the lawyers for Mr Haradinaj asked for an adjournment, due to the illness of the lead Counsel.

The Trial Panel stressed that such illness is not, on its own, a reason for delaying proceedings. However, the Panel took note of the difficulties of co-counsel in liaising with the accused in the absence of lead counsel, and postponed the beginning of the Haradinaj case until 11 January, when Mr. Haradinaj is expected to testify.

Also on Wednesday, the ninth status conference hearing was held in the case of Hashim Thaçi, Kadri Veseli, Rexhep Selimi and Jakup Krasniqi. Topics of discussion included a number of issues related to the disclosure of evidence by the Prosecution to the Defence, the translation of the SPO's preliminary witness list, the status of investigations and the filing of the Specialist Prosecutor's pre-trial brief.

On 10 December, the Pre-Trial Judge issued the second decision on victims' participation in this case, admitting 11 new victims to participate in the proceedings and deciding on protective measures for these participating victims. These victims will be included in the already existing Group 1 of participating victims and shall be represented by the same Victims' Counsel.

In the case of Pjetër Shala, the Pre-Trial Judge yesterday issued a decision admitting one victim to participate in the proceedings. The Pre-Trial Judge further instructed the Registrar to assign a Victims' Counsel by 28 January 2022.

It is important to emphasise that in all of the cases before the Kosovo Specialist Chambers, the process for victims to apply to participate in the proceedings remains open.

The winter judicial recess of the Kosovo Specialist Chambers will begin next Monday and last for three weeks. During the judicial recess period, court hearings are not

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conducted except in exceptional circumstances. However, the court remains fully functional otherwise during this period and work continues across all sections of the KSC.

The next public hearing in the new year is scheduled to take place on 11 January in the Gucati and Haradinaj case and the next weekly press briefing will take place on 13 January.

Journalist Questions

There were no questions asked

