



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 case against Hashim Thaçi, Kadri Veseli, Rexhep Selimi and Jakup Krasniqi, the Trial Panel on 10 April ordered the continued detention of Hashim Thaçi finding that the risk that he may obstruct the progress of the proceedings or commit further crimes continued to exist.

The Panel recalled that it had previously determined that Mr. Thaçi has the interest and ability to interfere with the proceedings and is facing charges on alleged influencing of witnesses. The Panel recalled that the names of highly sensitive witnesses should not become known to the public, even after they have testified, considering that many have been granted protective measures. In the Panel's view, this risk is not alleviated with the closing of the evidentiary phase of the case.

The Panel pointed out that the risk of interference also includes any attempt to retaliate against witnesses who have testified or to incentivise a witness to recant.

The Panel highlighted that such risk exists within a persistent climate of witness intimidation in Kosovo, which protective measures alone cannot overcome and concluded that these risks can only be effectively managed at the Specialist Chambers detention facility.

The Panel noted, however, that Mr. Thaçi has been in detention for a significant time and that this will require the Panel and the Parties to ensure that proceedings proceed as expeditiously as possible.

On 13 April, the public redacted version of Mr. Krasniqi's final trial brief, which was confidentially filed on 20 January, became available and can be found on the website of the Specialist Chambers.

In the trial of Hashim Thaçi, Bashkim Smakaj, Isni Kilaj, Fadil Fazliu, and Hajredin Kuçi on alleged influencing witnesses, the Single Trial Judge on 10 April granted a request by Mr. Kilaj's Defence to admit into evidence four witness statements in written form only.

The Single Trial Judge considered that the statements in question are about the character of the defendant rather than proving the acts and conduct of the accused. The Single Trial Judge noted that the Prosecution did not oppose the admission of the statements in written form and did not request to cross-examine any of these witnesses.

The Defence teams that decided to do so are currently presenting their evidence in this case. During the last hearing, the parties had discussed if certain Defence witnesses should be present in court or if their testimony can be admitted in written form only. The Single Trial Judge will decide whether a witness has to testify in court or whether their testimony can be submitted in written form only. Once decisions are issued on this

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question, there may be some indication of how many hearings will be needed before the closure of the evidentiary phase of the case.

