



The Specialist Prosecutor’s Office (SPO) is an internationalised and relocated prosecutor’s office in The Hague created to investigate and, if warranted, prosecute individuals for crimes alleged in the 2011 Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Report “Inhuman Treatment of People and Illicit Trafficking in Human Organs in Kosovo”.

MANDATE

The SPO mandate is set out in the Law on the Specialist Chambers and the Specialist Prosecutor’s Office adopted by the Kosovo Assembly in August 2015.

This legislation grants the SPO authority to investigate and prosecute citizens of Kosovo and/or the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia or individuals who committed crimes against citizens of Kosovo and/or the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia for crimes commenced or committed in Kosovo in relation to conduct identified in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Report during the three-year period from 1 January 1998 to 31 December 2000.

SPECIALIST PROSECUTOR



The Specialist Prosecutor is Kimberly West, a former US federal prosecutor with extensive experience in both domestic and international criminal investigations, who took up her post in October 2023.

Ms West is the third Specialist Prosecutor and succeeded Jack Smith, also a US prosecutor, who served between September 2018 and November 2022.

CONTACT

For further information, please contact the Specialist Prosecutor’s Office by email at: spokespersonSPO@scp-ks.org or by mail at:

Raamweg 47
2596 HN The Hague
The Netherlands

The first Specialist Prosecutor was David Schwendiman, another US prosecutor, who held the post between September 2016 and March 2018, having earlier served as Lead Prosecutor of the Special Investigative Task Force (SITF) between May 2015 and August 2016.

The original SITF Lead Prosecutor, who served between October 2011 and August 2014, was Clint Williamson, a former US Ambassador-at-Large for War Crimes Issues.

INVESTIGATION

The SPO was established on 1 September 2016, inheriting the staff and mandate of the Special Investigative Task Force, which began to investigate the allegations in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Report in October 2011 as an autonomous entity, deriving its jurisdiction and legal authority from the European Union Council Decision establishing EULEX, the EU Rule-of-Law Mission in Kosovo.

The Specialist Prosecutor is authorised to:

- question victims, witnesses and suspects, and record their statements;
- conduct on-site investigations, collect evidence, undertake expert examinations thereof and conduct such other investigative activities as necessary;
- seek the assistance of Third States and international organisations or other entities; and
- undertake investigative measures as laid out in the Rules of Procedure and Evidence.

To protect the integrity of the investigation, the confidentiality of witness testimony and ongoing collection of evidence, the SPO does not disclose specific information on the status of the investigation, evidence gathered in the course of the investigation or the timing of possible charges.

BACKGROUND

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe appointed Senator Dick Marty to investigate allegations contained in the memoir of former International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia Chief Prosecutor Carla Del Ponte, Madame Prosecutor, which was published in April 2008.

In the wake of publication of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Report, the European Union formed the Special Investigative Task Force to investigate the allegations contained in it. The Law on the Specialist Chambers and the Specialist Prosecutor's Office provided a mechanism for continuing the investigation and prosecuting charges deriving from it. The SPO is part of the judicial system of Kosovo, but based in the Netherlands on the basis of a Host State Agreement between the Netherlands and Kosovo of 15 February 2016. It is a temporary institution with a specific mandate and jurisdiction, namely over certain crimes against humanity, war crimes and other crimes under Kosovo law which allegedly occurred between 1 January 1998 and 31 December 2000.

PRIMACY OVER OTHER COURTS

The Specialist Chambers has primacy over all other courts in Kosovo. The Specialist Chambers or the SPO may order the transfer of proceedings within its jurisdiction from any other prosecutor or any other court in the territory of Kosovo to the Specialist Chambers and the SPO at any stage of an investigation or proceedings. The Specialist Chambers and the SPO can order a Kosovo court to hand over any ongoing cases or investigations that are within the jurisdiction and mandate of the Specialist Chambers or SPO.

All Kosovo courts and prosecutors must notify the Specialist Chambers and the SPO without delay should they be aware of a case of criminal proceedings within the jurisdiction of the Specialist Chambers

STAFFING

SPO staff – prosecutors, investigators, analysts, security professionals, witness-protection specialists and support workers – are internationals with citizenship of either an EU member state or one of the five non-EU contributing countries: Canada, Norway, Switzerland, Turkey and the United States.

KEY DOCUMENTS

- Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Report Inhuman treatment of people and illicit trafficking in human organs in Kosovo of January 2011
- Law on Ratification of International Agreement ("Exchange of Letters") adopted by the Kosovo Assembly in April 2014
- Constitution and Amendment of the Constitution, Article 162: The Specialist Chambers and the Specialist Prosecutor's Office adopted by the Kosovo Assembly in August 2015
- Law on Specialist Chambers and Specialist Prosecutor's Office adopted by the Kosovo Assembly in August 2015
- Agreement between the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Republic of Kosovo concerning the Hosting of the Kosovo Relocated Specialist Judicial Institution in the Netherlands (Host State Agreement) of February 2016
- Rules of Procedure and Evidence of the Specialist Chambers adopted by judges of Specialist Chambers that entered into force in July 2017