



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.

On 9 March 2026, the Supreme Court Panel, consisting of Judges Ekaterina Trendafilova (Presiding), Christine van den Wyngaert and Daniel Fransen, rejected Pjetër Shala's request for protection of legality in its entirety.

The request alleged several violations concerning the Appeal Judgment issued in July 2025. The Panel dismissed all the grounds raised by the Defence, finding no violation of Mr. Shala's fair trial rights, the criminal law, or the procedures, and declaring certain grounds inadmissible.

Among other submissions, Mr. Shala claimed that the 24-year delay between the events and his trial made the right to a fair trial very difficult. Recalling that under the Kosovo Criminal Code there is no statute of limitations for war crimes, the Judges highlighted how a wide variety of safeguards were applied in Mr. Shala's case to ensure fairness in the evaluation of the evidence.

As a reminder, in July 2024, the Trial Panel found Mr. Shala guilty of the war crimes of arbitrary detention, torture and murder. Mr. Shala appealed the Trial Judgment and in its July 2025 judgment, the Appeals Panel affirmed Mr Shala's convictions but reduced his overall sentence from 18 to 13 years of imprisonment, with credit for time served.

This was in part because for some of the victims the Prosecution had not presented evidence through a witness whom the Defence was able to question in court. This was significant because under the KSC Rules, a conviction may not be based solely or to a decisive extent on the statement of a witness whom the Defence had no opportunity to examine. Similarly, the Appeals Panel took into account the sentencing ranges





applicable at the time the crimes were committed in Kosovo and a variety of other factors and concluded that 13 years was a more appropriate sentence in this case.

By way of further background, this case concerned war crimes committed in May and June 1999, at the Kukës Metal Factory (KMF), a former metal works factory in the town of Kukës, in the north of Albania. Throughout this time, the KMF served as headquarters for the Kosovo Liberation Army in Kukës and was used for a variety of purposes, including recruitment, mobilisation and logistics.

The Trial Panel found that it was also used by certain KLA members to detain, interrogate and mistreat persons who were perceived to collaborate, be associated with, or sympathize with the Serbian authorities, or who were considered to be not sufficiently supportive of the KLA effort.

The victims were predominantly Kosovo Albanians.

The Trial Panel found that detainees were held in inhumane and degrading conditions, subjected to harsh interrogations, and forced to provide statements and confessions. According to the Trial Judgment, they were psychologically and physically mistreated and the brutal mistreatment left the detainees with long-lasting physical and mental injuries. The Trial Panel found that one detainee was shot by a KLA member, after having been also severely mistreated by a group of KLA members. He died from the consequences of the gunshot wounds, combined with the denial of appropriate medical treatment.

In May/June 1999, Mr. Shala was a member of the KLA. The Trial Panel found that he was physically present at the KMF on several occasions and participated, together with other KLA members, in the interrogation and brutal mistreatment of several detainees. According to the Trial Judgment, he also participated in the brutal mistreatment of the detainee who died after having been shot.





The Trial Panel awarded reparations to eight victims participating in the proceedings and ordered Mr. Shala to pay a sum of €208,000 as compensation for the physical, mental and material harm suffered by the victims.

