



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 trial of Hashim Thaci, Kadri Veseli, Jakup Krasniqi and Rexhep Selimi, the Trial Panel on 18 December 2025 rejected a request by the Prosecution to present Rebuttal Evidence. The Panel found that the Prosecution failed to demonstrate that the Request was in the interest of justice and concerned a significant issue arising directly from the Defence case. The Panel was further of the view that the evidence was available to the Prosecution before and that the Prosecution could have sought leave to amend its exhibit list at an earlier stage as part of its case rather than as rebuttal.

Also on 18 December, the Panel announced that evidentiary proceedings in this case are closed. The Panel noted that the Parties and Victims' Counsel have presented their cases and that there are no more witnesses to be called or additional evidence to be introduced. The Panel reiterated its order to the Parties and Victims' Counsel to file their Final Trial Briefs and Impact Statement by Monday, 19 January 2026.

The Panel further set out the schedule for closing statements from 9-13 February, and on 16 and 18 February. Having considered the submissions of the Parties and participants regarding time estimates for closing statements, the Panel set 8 hours for the closing statements of the Prosecution; 3 hours for Victims' Counsel's statement and 4.5 hours for each defence team.

The Panel noted that it may seek clarification on any matters raised in the Final Trial Briefs and announced that in advance of closing statements, it will issue an order in writing in which it will set out any questions for the Parties and participants. The Parties and participants are expected to incorporate any responses to the Panel's questions into their closing statements. The Panel will have a further two hours set aside for any follow-up questions not addressed in the closing statements of the Parties and participants or resulting from arguments and submissions made during those statements.

As the Parties have the right to respond or comment on each other's closing statements, the Panel set an additional 2.5 hours for such submissions by the Prosecution, 30 minutes for each defence team and an additional 20 minutes per accused. Should Victims' Counsel wish to respond, he may seek the leave of the Panel during the hearing if and when he considers it necessary.

Based on this, the current schedule for the closing statements looks as follows:

On Monday, 9 February, the Prosecution will present their closing statements.

On Tuesday, 10 February, the Prosecution will finish their closing statements and Victims' Counsel will present their closing statements.

Wednesday, 11 February is reserved for the closing statements of the Thaci Defence and part of the Veseli defence.





On Thursday, 12 February, the Veseli Defence will complete their closing statements, and the Selimi Defence will start theirs.

On Friday, 13 February, the Selimi Defence will finish their closing statements, and the Krasniqi Defence will start theirs.

Monday, 16 February is reserved for the completion of the closing statements of the Krasniqi Defence and the questions by the Trial Panel, if any.

On Wednesday, 18 February, the Parties will have time to respond to the closing statements of the other party and the accused will have the opportunity to make a statement. Afterwards the Panel will close the case.

This agenda is based on current estimates and may vary, for example if a party or participant needs less time than anticipated.

The Panel ordered the Accused, should they wish to speak, to be physically present in the courtroom, and reminded that political statements or offensive remarks about the Parties, participants, witnesses or victims will not be tolerated.

In the same case, on 19 and 29 December respectively, the Specialist Chambers of the Supreme Court dismissed Kadri Veseli's and Jakup Krasniqi's requests for protection of legality. The requests were filed at the end of 2025 after the Appeals Chamber had confirmed the Trial Panel's decisions to continue the detention of Mr. Veseli and Mr. Krasniqi. Both accused had argued among others that the Appeals Panel had failed to properly reassess the risks justifying their continued detention. The Supreme Court Panel, however, found that the Appeals Panel had properly assessed the continued existence of the relevant risks at the time of review and had articulated substantial reasoning establishing that the risk of obstruction continues to exist.

On 29 December, the Trial Panel rejected a request by Mr. Veseli to be permitted to appeal a previous decision by the Trial Panel in which it admitted, upon request of Mr. Thaci, a written witness statement into evidence. In Mr. Veseli's view, the said statement causes prejudice to Mr. Veseli. Among others, the Panel found that it had addressed any potential prejudicial impact on any of the accused when it found that the statement overlaps with other evidence the parties had the possibility to challenge in court. As such, the Panel found that Mr. Veseli merely disagreed with its previous decision, rather than demonstrating a potential error of law.

As the closing statements in the Thaci et al trial approach, we would like to recall some basic information about the case.

In November 2020, Hashim Thaçi, Kadri Veseli, Rexhep Selimi and Jakup Krasniqi were arrested following the confirmation of an indictment and issuance of arrest warrants by a judge.





The Prosecution alleges that the accused are individually responsible for the abduction, mistreatment and killing of hundreds of civilians and persons not taking part in hostilities. This allegedly included persons perceived to collaborate with Yugoslav forces, and political opponents. The accused have pleaded not guilty to all charges.

During the pre-trial phase, the Prosecution shared thousands of pages of evidence with the Defence. The Defence conducted their own investigations and made legal challenges against the indictment and the jurisdiction of the court. Victims applied to participate. 155 victims are participating in the proceedings.

Between April 2023 and April 2025, the Prosecution called 125 witnesses. Between September and November 2025, the Defence teams called 7 witnesses. Each side had the opportunity to ask questions and challenge the testimony of witnesses called by the other side.

Under the law, an accused can only be detained if judges determine there are risks that justify it. So far, in over 25 detention reviews, the judges have found that Mr. Thaçi and his co-accused pose a risk of committing further offences, in particular against persons who testified or are due to testify before the Specialist Chambers. The judges have also highlighted that detention seeks to prevent the risk of retaliation against witnesses or attempts to incentivise a witness to recant. The judges will continue to review every two months whether detention is still needed to address such risks.

When it comes to the publicity of the proceedings, a majority of the 134 witnesses who testified in the courtroom during the trial did so either entirely or mostly in public session. 61 of these witnesses testified without any protective measures.

Testimony which took place in private session is continually being reviewed and reclassified wherever possible and lesser redacted transcripts are continually being issued, to ensure that the proceedings are public and can be followed by any interested person.

In the case of Hashim Thaci, Bashkim Smakaj, Fadil Fazliu, Isni Kilaj and Hajredin Kuci concerning allegations of the illegal influencing of witnesses, the Single Trial Judge on 19 and 22 December respectively denied interim requests by Mr. Fazliu and Mr. Smakaj to reconsider their continued detention. Both accused argued that new circumstances have arisen as the time they have already spent in detention now equals the time a minimum sentence would have should they be convicted of the offences they are accused of. The Single Trial Judge found that these circumstances were already known and could have been argued during their recent bi-monthly detention reviews. As such, the Single Trial judge found that the arguments do not justify an interim detention review. He, however, encouraged the Parties to ensure that their submissions on the next bi-monthly detention review are comprehensive and up to date.

On 22 December, the Single Trial Judge adopted the Decision on Conduct of Proceedings in this case in which he addressed issues relevant to the publicity of the proceedings, to the admission of evidence as well as to witness preparation and testimonies. Among others, The Single Trial Judge decided that in accordance with





the public character of the proceedings, the Parties shall endeavour to file written submissions as public documents as far as possible and minimize private and closed sessions to the extent possible. Public redacted versions of filings are to be submitted no later than three days after the original filing was submitted. Transcripts of hearings are to be reviewed two weeks after the completion of each evidentiary block with a view to assessing whether redactions, if any were applied, can be lifted or reduced.

Any protective measures for witnesses decided on by the Pre-Trial Judge remain in effect and additional requests on such measures have to be made no later than at the time of filing the final list of witnesses. Contact between the witnesses and any party shall be prohibited from the moment the witness takes the solemn declaration at the start of their testimony.

On 30 December, President Trendafilova assigned Judges Vidar Stensland, Roumen Nenkov and Piotr Hofmanski to a Constitutional Court Panel following a referral by Mr. Thaci after the Court of Appeals Panel had denied his appeal challenging the assignment of the Pre-Trial Judge in this case.

On 7 January, the Single Trial Judge granted a joint request by the Defence to extend the deadline and increase the word limit for the Defence's joint response to the Prosecution's Bar Table Motion from 17 December through which the Prosecution requested the admission into evidence of over 300 items that are not linked to any witness testimony.

The Single Trial Judge was persuaded that there was good cause for an extension of the time limit considering the volume of material tendered; the importance of the material to the proceedings; and the technical complexity of some of the items.

Finally, in response to recent misinformation about humanitarian visits, we would like to emphasise that, based on international human rights law, the Kosovo Specialist Chambers legal framework allows detainees to request a visit to Kosovo on compelling humanitarian grounds, for example to visit a critically ill relative. So far, fourteen such visits by detainees to Kosovo have been ordered by the judges of the Specialist Chambers and managed by the court.

