



## 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.

The President of the Specialist Chambers, Judge Ekaterina Trendafilova, on 11 December 2025, decided not to commute or modify Mr Haxhi Shala's sentence, two-thirds of which has been served.

As a reminder, Haxhi Shala, Sabit Januzi and Ismet Bahtijari earlier pleaded guilty to one charge of obstruction and one charge of intimidation in relation to a Specialist Chambers witness. Each accused admitted that they were part of a group which sought to induce this person to refrain from giving evidence before the Kosovo Specialist Chambers through the promise of a benefit.

In her decision on Mr. Shala's sentence, the KSC President noted that Mr. Shala has not expressed remorse during any of the multiple opportunities afforded to him to do so, for example during his plea agreement hearing or in the written filings connected with his sentence.

Under the law, after a convicted person has served two-thirds of their sentence, he or she becomes eligible for consideration of commutation, modification or alteration of the sentence. This decision is taken by the President of the Specialist Chambers, in consultation with the Specialist Chambers Judges, on the basis of the interests of justice and the general principles of law. There is no automatic right to a sentence being commuted, modified or altered after two-thirds has been served.

In her recent decision, the KSC President also indicated that she will reconsider a possible modification of Mr Shala's sentence in two months' time, once she receives a further report from the Registrar, including on any clear and genuine dissociation from the crime of which Mr Shala was convicted.

In the trial of Hashim Thaci, Kadri Veseli, Jakup Krasniqi and Rexhep Selimi, we would like to remind the public that closing Statements are scheduled to take place from **9 to 13 February 2026**.

As a reminder, the confirmed indictment includes charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity. In the indictment, 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. The alleged victims were persons deemed to be opponents of the Kosovo Liberation Army. This allegedly included persons perceived to collaborate with Yugoslav forces and political opponents. The accused have pleaded not guilty to all charges.

During closing statements, the Prosecution and the Defence each summarize their arguments. Victims' Counsel speaks about the impact of the alleged crimes on victims.





After this, the Trial Panel will close the case and enter into deliberations in order to reach a judgment.

The judges will carefully assess the credibility of witnesses, the reliability and weight of the testimony of witnesses and each piece of evidence.

The judgment should be pronounced within 90 days of the closing of the case. Where the circumstances require additional time, a further extension of 60 days is possible.

Trials at the Kosovo Specialist Chambers are conducted by the judges in strict accordance with the law and the highest international standards of justice. Defendants may appeal decisions by one panel of judges to a second and sometimes third level of judges. Beyond this, the Specialist Chamber of the Constitutional Court offers further human rights protection to defendants.

All accused are presumed innocent unless the prosecution proves their guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

When it comes to the specific issue of the detention of the accused in this case, it is also important to emphasise that a person can only be detained if the judges determine that certain risks exist that cannot be mitigated outside of detention. Every two months, the judges assess whether detention is still necessary and justified based on the information before them at that time.

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 court's Winter recess period starts on 22 December 2025 and lasts until 9 January 2026. During this period, no hearings will take place, but the court's other activities will continue without interruption.

The next online press briefing will take place on 15 January at 2:30 in the afternoon.

