



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 Thaçi, Bashkim Smakaj, Fadil Fazliu, Isni Kilaj and Hajredin Kuçi concerning allegations about the illegal influencing of witnesses, the Defence of Isni Kilaj on 25 February 2026 filed their pre-trial brief. It became public on 26 February and can be accessed on the Specialist Chambers website along with the previously submitted pre-trial briefs of the Prosecution and the other Defence teams.

The Prosecution alleges that during separate, unprivileged visits to the Detention Facilities, Hashim Thaçi provided Messrs Smakaj, Kilaj, Fazliu and Kuçi with confidential information about witnesses called by the prosecution in the Thaçi et al war crimes and crimes against humanity case, instructed them to influence the testimonies of the witnesses, and provided details about how to do so.

All accused in this case have pleaded not guilty to all charges.

The opening statements in this case took place on 27 February with the Prosecution presenting their opening statements followed by the Defence of Bashkim Smakaj and Isni Kilaj. Under the Rules, the Defence may choose whether to deliver their opening statement after the opening statement of the Specialist Prosecutor or later, after the conclusion of the presentation of evidence by the Specialist Prosecutor, or not at all. The video recordings of the opening statements can be found on the Specialist Chambers YouTube Channel.

Throughout the week, the Specialist Prosecutor presented their case and three witnesses called by the Prosecution testified. The first witness testified under protective measures. The second witness, Koen Herlaar, works at the Netherlands Forensic Institute and testified about specific evidence secured in this case. The third witness, Christopher Kelly, is a part time contractor of the Prosecution working in digital forensic investigations. The Defence has cross-examined all three witnesses.

Part of the evidence presented in this case are recordings of conversations during visits to Mr. Thaci in the detention facility. Based on publicly available decisions by the Single Judge, this monitoring and recording took place for a limited period of time in 2023. It concerned only non-privileged visits, meaning visits by friends and acquaintances, and was authorized by the Single Judge as a special investigative measure. The basis for ordering these measures was a grounded suspicion of illegal witness interference.

Private visits with spouses and children, and privileged visits by counsel were not and are not subject to monitoring or recording.

On Tuesday, the Single Trial Judge issued an oral order on the request by Isni Kilaj, Bashkim Smakaj, Fadil Fazliu and Hajredin Kuçi to vary certain conditions of their provisional release. The Judge permitted that the four accused may communicate with one another while on the premises of the Specialist Chambers in The

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Hague, including in relation to their case, provided that no confidential matters are discussed in public areas of the premises. All other aspects of the previous orders remain unchanged.

Concerning the next steps in this case, the Single Trial Judge announced that the Prosecution is expected to close its case latest on 18 March. The independent counsel who is reviewing certain evidence, so no privileged or private information is mistakenly shared with the Prosecution is ordered to file their final report by 13 March. Defence Counsel has been ordered to notify the court if they intend to file a request for dismissal of charges by 19 March and to file the actual motion, if applicable, latest on 25 March 2026.

In the trial of Hashim Thaçi, Kadri Veseli, Rexhep Selimi and Jakup Krasniqi on charges of alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity, the Defence for Kadri Veseli on 27 February filed a public redacted version of its final trial brief, which was initially submitted confidentially on 19 January 2026. The filing is available on the Specialist Chambers website.

