



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, Isni Kilaj, Fadil Fazliu, and Hajredin Kuçi on the alleged illegal influencing of witnesses, during the last week, the Defence of Messieurs Kuci, Kilaj, Fazliu and Thaçi closed their cases understanding that they may be permitted to present additional evidence depending on the outcome of a pending appeal. The Smakaj Defence on 15 May notified the Panel that at this point, they do not intend to present a case, but they may change their mind depending on the outcome of the appeal.

In the Thaçi et al. war crimes and crimes against humanity case, the Trial Panel on 15 May ordered the continued detention of Jakup Krasniqi and Kadri Veseli. The Panel noted that the names and details of certain highly sensitive witnesses have been disclosed to the accused and that the release of an accused with sensitive information in their possession would not be conducive to the effective protection of witnesses, regardless of the stage of the proceedings. The Panel further recalled that there is a persistent climate of witness intimidation in Kosovo and reminded that the risk of interference which detention seeks to prevent also includes any attempt to retaliate against or incentivise to recant witnesses who have already testified. In view of the Panel these risks can only be sufficiently mitigated through the communication monitoring framework applicable at the SC Detention Facilities.

On 19 May, the Specialist Chambers of the Constitutional Court elected Judge Vidar Stensland as Presiding Judge for the term of one year and starting on 1 June 2026. The Rules of Procedure of the Specialist Chambers of the Constitutional Court provide that the Judges of the Constitutional Court shall every year elect by absolute majority a Presiding Judge to perform the specified responsibilities upon assignment by the President of the Specialist Chambers for one year.

