

Weekly Press Briefing
(17 September 2021; 15:00)
Chambers & Registry

Welcome to the first weekly press briefing of the Kosovo Specialist Chambers where we will provide you with a regular update on the proceedings and activities of the Court

We intend to provide these press briefings on Fridays at 15:00.

For the time being, attendance will be through Zoom only. Journalists will be given an opportunity to ask questions at the end of the briefings and we will try to answer to the best of our ability. If we cannot immediately answer your question today, we will get back to you in writing.

This was a busy and important week for the Kosovo Specialist Chambers, with two public hearings held in two different cases.

The first such hearing took place on Tuesday in the case of the *Specialist Prosecutor v. Hashim Thaçi* and co-accused. The Pre-Trial Judge held what is known as a status conference. Such a hearing is held regularly to give the Specialist Prosecutor and the Defence the opportunity to raise with the Pre-Trial Judge any issues they may have and to update the Judge on where they stand as they prepare for the actual trial.

During the status conference in the *Thaçi et al.* case on Tuesday, a variety of topics were discussed, including the date by when the Specialist Prosecutor should inform the Pre-Trial Judge of his initial list of witnesses he intends to call during the trial proceedings as well as a process known as “disclosure”.

Disclosure is the obligation on the Specialist Prosecutor to provide the Defence with the evidence upon which he intends to rely to prove his case.

The parties also updated the Pre-Trial Judge on the status of their investigations and the Defence asked about the progress of the translation of important decisions.

Concerning translations, the Registry confirmed that all the documents that are required under the Law and the Rules to be translated have already been translated. The parties can additionally request that certain filings are prioritised for translation.

On Wednesday, the KSC reached a significant milestone with the start of the first trial in the case against Mr Salih Mustafa.

On this day, the Specialist Prosecutor and the lawyer representing the nine participating victims in this case gave what are known as “opening statements”. During his opening statement, the Specialist Prosecutor presented his case and explained what he intends to prove by the end of the trial. The Victims’ Counsel spoke about the views of the victims during her opening statement.

The Judges of the Trial Panel in this case previously decided that the Specialist Prosecutor will have 87 hours to present his case. During this time, the Specialist Prosecutor indicated that he intends to call 16 witnesses, of whom 15 are expected to testify in person.

Mr Mustafa’s Counsel said that he plans to give his opening statement after the closing of the Specialist Prosecutor’s case.

The Mustafa trial will continue next Monday at 9:30 with the testimony of the first witness in the case. The trial proceedings in this case will continue throughout next week and the months of September and October.

You can find more information on scheduled hearings on the court calendar on our website. Public hearings are broadcast with a 45-minute delay unless otherwise indicated.

All public hearings will be posted on our YouTube channel in Albanian, Serbian, and English after the hearing.

Regarding the issue of visits to the detainees, we are pleased to inform you that as of 6 September, based on medical advice, personal visits are not restricted to immediate family members anymore.

A journalist asked for more information on the first witness to testify in the Salih Mustafa case and was informed that it is going to be a prosecution witness. The same journalist informed the spokesperson that Friday afternoon was not a good day for press briefings as most journalists based in the Netherlands have other press briefings to attend to at that time.