



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 trial of Pjetër Shala began this week with opening statements on Tuesday and Wednesday. Mr. Shala is charged on the basis of individual criminal responsibility with four counts of war crimes: arbitrary detention, cruel treatment, torture and murder. He has pleaded not guilty to all charges.

On 21 February, the Specialist Prosecutor's Office and Victims' Counsel delivered their respective opening statements. On 22 February, the Defence delivered its opening statement and Mr Shala made a brief unsworn statement.

Evidentiary hearings in this case will start on 27 March when the first witness called by the Prosecution will testify.

In the *Thaçi et al.* case, the Trial Panel issued its fifth decision on victims' participation on 15 February and a public redacted version was made available on 20 February.

84 new applicants were admitted to participate in the proceedings and they will be included in the existing group of victims in this case to be represented by the same Victims' Counsel. This brings the total number of participating victims in the case to 137. A decision on 10 additional applications for the status of participating victims as detailed in the 11th and 12th Registry Report is still pending.

In the same case, on 17 February, the Trial Panel ordered the continued detention of Hashim *Thaçi* and Kadri Veseli. In the decisions, the Trial Panel found that the risks that Mr *Thaçi* and Mr Veseli will obstruct the progress of proceedings and/or commit further crimes continued to exist and could not be sufficiently mitigated through alternatives to detention.

Yesterday, the Trial Panel in the same case rejected a request by the Selimi Defence for the scheduling of a further initial appearance of the Accused. The Defence made this request in light of the lifting of redactions on some of the allegations from the indictment. The Trial Panel found that the removal of redactions from the Indictment does not constitute or result in "new charges". However, the Trial Panel also decided that for reasons of fairness, all four Accused would be afforded the opportunity to amend their plea, should they wish to do so, having had the benefit of reading a completely unredacted indictment.

In the case of Salih Mustafa, the Court of Appeals Panel denied a Defence motion seeking the exclusion of Victims' Counsel from participating in the appellate proceedings. The Court of Appeal Panel found that there is a legal basis for the participation of victims through Counsel in the appellate proceedings. A pre-appeal hearing was held last week.





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DHOMAT E SPECIALIZUARA TË KOSOVËS
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Journalist Questions

No questions asked.

