



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 *Thaçi et al.* case, the Panel on 28 August rejected a request by the Selimi Defence to exclude certain evidence in connection with the testimony of a witness. The Panel based their rejection on the fact that the Prosecution and Victims' Counsel had confirmed that they do not intend to ask the witness about the issues the Defence was concerned about.

During the week, two witnesses called by the prosecution testified in court in this case. According to the summary provided by the Prosecution, the first witness, Imer Imeri, was abducted by masked KLA soldiers in Albania because he supported Ibrahim Rugova and the LDK party. According to the Prosecution summary, Mr Imeri was first detained in Albania and, around mid-June 1999, transferred to Prizren in Kosovo. The second witness, Rrustem Tetaj, is a former KLA officer who held various positions in the Dukagjini operational zone during the summer of 1998.

So far 84 witnesses have testified in court in this case, in addition to those witness testimonies admitted only in written form.

The next hearing in this case is scheduled for Monday, 16 September, starting at 9:00 in the morning.

On 3 September, President Trendafilova assigned a Court of Appeals Panel to consider Pjetër Shala's notice of appeal against the trial judgment issued in his case. The Appeals Panel consists of Judges Michèle Picard, Kai Ambos and Nina Jørgensen.

On 4 September, the Presiding Judge scheduled a Pre-Appeal Conference on Friday, 20 September 2024 at 10:00. During the hearing, the parties are expected to make submissions and the Panel will ask an update on the progress made with the translation of the Trial Judgment into Albanian.

Mr Shala was on 16 July 2024 convicted of the war crimes of arbitrary detention, torture and murder and sentenced to 18 years of imprisonment, with credit for the time served. This is the second appeals case before the Specialist Chambers involving war crimes.

On 3 September, President Trendafilova assigned Trial Panel I to the case of Sabit Januzi, Ismet Bahtijari and Haxhi Shala. The Trial Panel consists of Judges Roland Dekkers, Mappie Veldt-Foglia, Gilbert Bitti and Vladimir Mikula as reserve Judge. The President's decision followed a notification by the Pre-Trial Judge that the case file would be ready for transmission to a Trial Panel on 4 September 2024.

On 3 September, the Pre-Trial Judge rejected a request by Haxhi Shala to order the provision of translations into Albanian of all documents in the case file. The Pre-Trial Judge found that the accused have sufficient

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methods to understand the case and that the Defence failed to demonstrate that the existing regime for translating evidence is inadequate. The Pre-Trial Judge considered that granting the request would have further delayed the transfer of the case to trial. The Pre-Trial Judge also reminded the Defence that the KSC legal aid system includes allotments for Defence teams for interpretation and translation.

The Specialist Chambers translate all public documents and filings into the three languages of the court, Albanian, Serbian and English, as rapidly as possible. In light of the requirement to ensure that documents are translated to the highest standards, it can take some time before translations into Albanian and Serbian are completed in cases where the working language is English.

To provide the accused with the most important documents in their language as soon as possible, the Rules of Procedure and Evidence provide that certain documents are given priority when it comes to translation. For example, an indictment has to be given to the accused in a language they understand.

On 2 and 3 September 2024, the Pre-Trial Judge's authorizations from 28 April, 3 May and 25 September 2023 for the search and seizure of the persons of Sabit Januzi and Ismet Bahtijari became public. These can be found on the KSC website.

