



## 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, Kadri Veseli, Rexhep Selimi and Jakup Krasniqi, the public redacted version of Hashim Thaçi's final trial brief became public on 27 March. In their final trial briefs, the parties summarize the key facts, evidence, and legal arguments of their respective cases.

In the trial of Hashim Thaçi, Bashkim Smakaj, Isni Kilaj, Fadil Fazliu, and Hajredin Kuçi, all five Defence teams have now notified the Trial Judge about whether they intend to present evidence during the trial. A Defence Preparation conference took place yesterday, 1 April, during which further details about the Defence cases came to light.

The Thaçi and Kilaj Defence intend to present cases and have submitted witness and exhibit lists. Mr. Thaçi's Defence intends to submit one witness testimony in writing. The Trial Judge may also decide, based on the rules, that the witness needs to appear in court for cross-examination.

During the hearing, the Trial Judge also noted that two reports submitted by the Thaçi Defence appear to be expert reports to which Rule 149 would apply. This means that if the opposing party, in this case the Prosecution, does not accept the reports, the authors of these reports may need to testify in court.

In addition to the evidence to be presented by the Thaçi's Defence, Mr. Kilaj's Defence intends to submit four witness testimonies in writing related to Mr. Kilaj's character.

The Defence teams of Messrs. Smakaj, Fazliu and Kuçi will not present cases.

Given the fact that applications for the admission of written testimony are still pending, and therefore it is not known whether witnesses will need to testify in court, the Judge asked the parties to remain available for a potential hearing on 14 and 15 April 2026 and cancelled the scheduled hearings before then. He also ordered the Thaçi Defence to file any request related to expert testimony by today, 2 April, noting that yesterday was the applicable deadline for filing such requests.

In the same case, a public redacted version of the Single Trial Judge's decision dated 19 March, concerning a Prosecution request to recognize certain facts as common knowledge, was released on 30 March. In his decision, the Judge rejected the request, finding that the Prosecution did not sufficiently show how the proposed facts were relevant to the charges.

On 31 March, the Single Trial Judge granted a request by the Prosecution to extend the deadline to respond to a motion by the Thaçi Defence seeking to have a witness testify in written form only. The Judge granted the extension, finding that the Prosecution provided good cause and noting that the Thaçi Defence did not

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object, provided that their own deadline to reply would also be extended. The Judge set the new deadlines as 8 April for the Prosecution's response and 13 April for the Defence's reply.

Also on 31 March, the Registrar informed the Single Trial Judge that she appointed Mr. Derrick Gooden as Co-Counsel to Mr. Bashkim Smakaj.

In the Pjetër Shala case, KSC President, Judge Ekaterina Trendafilova on 25 March assigned a Constitutional Court Panel to decide on Mr. Shala's request for an extension of time to file a referral before the Constitutional Court. President Trendafilova assigned Judges Vidar Stensland, Roumen Nenkov and Piotr Hofmański. On 31 March, the Panel partially granted Mr. Shala's request, setting 1 June by which Mr Shala is to file his referral.

As a reminder, the Trial Panel found Mr Shala guilty of the war crimes of arbitrary detention, torture and murder in July 2024, in connection with events that took place at the Kukës Metal Factory in May and June 1999, where predominantly Kosovo Albanian victims were held in inhumane and degrading conditions and subjected to brutal psychological and physical mistreatment, leaving the detainees with long-lasting physical and mental injuries. One detainee was shot by a Kosovo Liberation Army member, after having been also severely mistreated by a group of KLA members. He died from the consequences of the gunshot wounds, combined with the denial of appropriate medical treatment.

The Trial Panel awarded reparations to eight victims participating in the proceedings and ordered Mr. Shala to pay a sum of €208,000 as compensation for the physical, mental and material harm they suffered.

The Appeals Panel upheld Mr. Shala's conviction and the reparations order but reduced his sentence in July 2025 from 18 to 13 years of imprisonment, with credit for time served.

