



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, the Single Trial Judge issued a new order on the further conduct of proceedings on 8 July.

Following the admission of the expert evidence of Witness 8, pursuant to an earlier decision of the Court of Appeals Panel, the Judge instructed the Defence to notify the court by 15 July 2026 whether it intends to present any additional evidence in response to Witness 8's testimony.

Should the Defence not seek to present any additional evidence, the Single Trial Judge indicated that he intends to close the evidentiary proceedings on 16 July 2026 and invite the Parties to file their final trial briefs by 22 July and their reply briefs by 5 August 2026.

On 2 July, the KSC President assigned a panel of the Specialist Chamber of the Constitutional Court to decide on a referral to be submitted by Pjetër Shala. On 3 July, the panel granted in part Mr. Shala's request for an extension of time to file the referral, ordering that the referral now be filed by 15 September 2026. The referral relates to the reparation order issued by Trial Panel I for the victims of the crimes for which Mr. Shala was convicted in July 2024.

As a reminder, the Trial Panel found that the Specialist Prosecutor had proven beyond a reasonable doubt that Mr. Shala committed the war crimes of arbitrary detention and torture against detainees at a site in northern Albania in 1999 and participated in the murder of a detainee.

The case concerned crimes committed at the Kukës Metal Factory, a site operated by members of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). Victims, who were predominantly Albanians, were apprehended and detained on allegations of being "traitors" or "collaborators".

They were unlawfully held in locked rooms under degrading and abusive conditions. The evidence demonstrated that the unlawfully detained victims were subjected to severe physical torture, psychological abuse, and inhumane and degrading detention conditions and that they suffered lasting physical injuries and long-term trauma.

Detainees were physically and psychologically abused by several KLA members, including Mr. Shala. During interrogations, KLA members beat detainees with batons and baseball bats all over their bodies. They kicked them, punched them, cut them with knives, burned them with cigarettes, and threw salt on their wounds. Some of the detainees were also shot. The mistreatment left them bruised, covered in blood, unable to stand, or unconscious.

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The Trial Panel convicted Mr. Shala of arbitrary detention, torture and murder as war crimes and sentenced him to 18 years of imprisonment. The Court of Appeals Panel reduced Mr Shala's sentence to 13 years of imprisonment.

The Kosovo Specialist Chambers continues this week with the publication of a series of videos, "Reflecting on the Specialist Chambers Mandate and Work", which directly address questions frequently asked.

Topics and questions covered in the ten videos published so far include:

- An introduction from the KSC President
- An answer to the question "Why the KSC Does not deal with every Crime"
- Detention and Provisional Release, including information about cases where provisional release was granted
- Fair Trial Standards and the Rights of the Accused
- Humanitarian Visits
- Oversight and Accountability
- Transparency
- Evidence and Witness Testimony
- Individual Criminal Responsibility

The latest video, published yesterday explores how the independence, impartiality and professionalism of KSC is judges is ensured, including through the selection process and through the Code of Judicial Ethics.

An online library of these videos can be accessed in Albanian, Serbian, or English through a window at the top of the KSC homepage, and they can be viewed on the court's YouTube, X, or Instagram channels.

