



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 case of Hashim Thaci, Kadri Veseli, Rexhep Selimi and Jakup Krasniqi concerning alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity, the Trial Panel on 16 March ordered the continued detention of Kadri Veseli finding that the risks that Mr. Veseli may obstruct the progress of proceedings or commit further crimes remained.

The Panel maintained its view that the names and personal details of certain highly sensitive witnesses have been disclosed to the Defence and that, regardless of the current stage of the proceedings, the release of an Accused with sensitive information in his possession would not be conducive to the effective protection of witnesses. In this regard, the Panel recalled its finding that the risk of interference which detention seeks to prevent also includes any attempt to retaliate against or incentivise to recant witnesses who have already testified

While the Panel considered the current potential for interference was limited noting that the Prosecution has recently closed its case also in parallel proceedings, it reminded of the persistent climate of witness intimidation and interference with criminal proceedings against former KLA members in Kosovo which protective measures alone cannot overcome.

The Panel further maintained its view that it is only through the communication monitoring framework applicable at the Specialist Chambers Detention Facilities, that Mr Veseli's communication can be restricted in a manner that would sufficiently mitigate the risks of obstruction.





The Panel acknowledged that Mr Veseli has been in detention for a significant period of time and was mindful of the need to ensure that the proceedings proceed as expeditiously as possible.

On 13 March the Single Trial Judge set several deadlines for the case of Hashim Thaci, Bashkim Smakaj, Isni Kilaj, Fadil Fazliu and Hajredin Kuci on alleged influencing of witnesses.

Should the defence intend to file a request for dismissal of one or all charges in this case, the Single Trial Judge ordered them to do so by latest 23 March. Any response to such motion by the Prosecution shall be filed by 25 March. The Single Trial Judge intends to render a decision on such motions, if any, by latest 27 March.

Subject to the outcome of such motion, and should the Defence choose to present a case, the Defence is ordered to file any information about the presentation of their case including their list of witnesses, information about their testimony, other evidence they intend to present as well as an estimate of the length of the defence case by 27 March. Supplemental information and disclosure may be provided until 1 April. Any Defence motion for the admission of non-testimonial evidence shall be filed by 2 April 2026.

A Defence Preparation Conference shall be held during the week of 30 March 2026.

Defence opening statements, if any, will be presented on 7 April followed by the hearing of all defence witnesses between 7 and 24 April 2026. Hashim Thaci, Fadil Fazliu and Hajredin Kuci have not yet given any opening statements and may choose to do so at the beginning of the defence case.

On 12 March, the Single Trial Judge rejected a request by the Smakaj defence to redact certain parts of transcripts and translations of two audio recordings of Mr. Smakaj's visits to Mr. Thaci. The parts the Smakaj defence requested to be redacted





were adding either the identity of the speaker, the tone of the voice or the description of non-verbal sounds like movements or actions.

The Single Trial Judge considered that a decision on the admission into evidence of the transcripts and translations of the two audio recordings in their entirety had already been rendered. The Single Trial Judge reminded however, that it was understood that the Prosecution's attribution of speaker identities as well as its descriptions of speaker tone or non-verbal sounds heard on the audio, has no evidential value and that no weight will be placed on these attributions or descriptions.

The Single Trial Judge therefore found that the Smakaj Defence has not demonstrated any error of reasoning in that previous decision, nor has it demonstrated that reconsideration is necessary to avoid an injustice.

On 16 January, the Single Trial judge granted in part a request by the Thaci defence to lift the prohibition of non-privileged visits of 11 specific individuals to Mr. Thaci at the detention facility.

The Single Trial Judge lifted the prohibition of the visits regarding one individual and ordered the continued prohibition of non-privileged visits to Mr. Thaci for the remaining 10 individuals.

The Single Trial Judge reminded that these measures were taken based on a judicial finding of well-grounded suspicion that the 11 individuals allegedly participated in misconduct that endangered the safety and security of witnesses in a criminal proceeding. The Single Trial judge considered that the restrictions do not concern family visits and are limited in number as they only concern 10 individuals. As such, the Single Trial Judge found that the restrictions do not interfere with Mr Thaci's right to respect for family life.





The Single Trial Judge was mindful that the risk of sensitive information pertaining to witnesses becoming known to the public exists even after the testimony of witnesses, since many of the witnesses have protective measures and their identities should not become known to the public at any time.

The Single Judge therefore found the remaining measures necessary and proportionate. He confirmed however, that the present decision will be maintained only for as long as necessary and proportionate and announced that the next review of Mr Thaci's detention conditions will be upon the close of the presentation of evidence in this case or upon any interim request for review by the Thaci defence.

The decision became public on 16 March and can be found on the website of the Specialist Chambers.

Finally, I would like to inform you that next week, on Thursday, 26 March, the Specialist Chambers press briefing will take place at 9:30 in the morning. Afterwards the transcript as well as the recording will be available online on the website.

