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## **KOSOVO'S LEADERS HAIL EX-FIGHTERS HEADED TO WAR CRIMES COURT**

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14.01.2019

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ABC News (13 January 2019)

Kosovo's prime minister met Sunday with two fellow former fighters in a bloody war for independence from Serbia two decades ago who are preparing to be questioned by prosecutors for a special war crimes court.

Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj's Facebook page showed photos from the meetings at the homes of former Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) members Sami Lushtaku and Rustem Mustafa. He said the 1998-1999 war was "clean and sacred."

Mustafa is set to be interviewed on Monday and Lushtaku on Wednesday by the Specialist Prosecutor's Office, their lawyer, Arianit Koci, said. The office is part of a court established in 2015 to investigate atrocity allegations against some KLA fighters from during and after the war for independence.

The court is governed by Kosovo laws but is run by international judges and prosecutors and funded by the European Union. It is based in the Netherlands to prevent witness intimidation.

Haradinaj, a former Kosovo Liberation Army leader, was twice acquitted of war crimes and crimes against humanity by a United Nations court.

"Together we shall come out spotless from this challenge," he wrote on Facebook.

President Hashim Thaci, who also fought with KLA, expressed support for the pair as well.

"You are the war national heroes and you always will remain as such for the Kosovo institutions and the people," Thaci wrote on his Facebook page, which included a photo of the president with Lushtaku and Mustafa.

While preparing for a flight to The Hague, Lushtaku facetiously told journalists at the airport he would "feel bad" if he hadn't been summoned by the court.

Mustafa said before leaving for the Netherlands they consider themselves innocent.

The court was set up following U.S. and EU pressure four years after a 2011 report by the Council of Europe, the continent's top human rights body, catalogued allegations of widespread crimes committed by Kosovo independence fighters.

<https://abcnews.go.com/beta-story-container/International/wireStory/kosovo-fighters-questioned-international-court-60344526>

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