

Reform UK's Bold Prison Plan Targets Crime Reduction

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Nigel Farage, leader of Reform UK, has unveiled an ambitious plan to create over 30,000 new prison places as part of a five-year strategy to halve crime rates in Britain. The proposal includes sending some of the nation's most serious offenders to serve sentences in foreign jails, with El Salvador named as a potential destination. Farage's vision, outlined in a recent speech, aims to tackle what he describes as a crisis in law and order, dismissing official data claiming crime has decreased over the past decade.

Farage's plan hinges on three key measures: repatriating 10,400 foreign prisoners to their countries of origin, transferring 10,000 serious British offenders to foreign jails, and constructing 12,400 new prefabricated high-security cells on Army land in England and Wales. The Reform leader estimates the cost of renting foreign prison spaces at £250 million annually, a figure significantly lower than the £40,000 per prisoner per year cited in a prior Conservative government assessment. Critics, including Conservative shadow chancellor Mel Stride, have branded the policy "fantasy," arguing that Farage's costings are unrealistic and lack detail.

In a recent interview with *The Telegraph*, Farage acknowledged that discussions with El Salvador's leadership have not yet taken place, though he claimed to have spoken with Albania's Prime Minister, suggesting the country "may agree" to accept UK prisoners. He also floated Kosovo and Estonia as alternative destinations, sidestepping concerns about El Salvador's controversial human rights record. Farage argued that exiting the European Convention on Human Rights would be necessary to implement the foreign jails policy, a move likely to spark fierce debate.

Beyond prisons, Reform UK's crime strategy includes recruiting 30,000 new police officers for £10.5 billion over five years. Farage has called for a return to "big, beefy" male officers, asserting they would instil fear in potential criminals. "If people out for trouble see a couple of strapping police officers, they'll think twice," he told *GB News*. The plan also proposes prosecuting all shoplifters and introducing "three strikes and you're out" life sentences for repeat offenders, even for lesser crimes.

The Labour government, alongside other major parties, has dismissed Reform's proposals as poorly thought out. Critics argue that Farage underestimates the costs of additional police resources, omitting expenses for vehicles, equipment, and infrastructure. In response, Farage told *Sky News* that crime's £80 billion annual economic toll justifies the investment: "We can't afford *not* to act."

Despite holding only four MPs after one resignation and one suspension since the 2024 General Election, Reform UK commands a 28 per cent share in recent national opinion polls, ahead of Labour's 23 per cent. Farage's law-and-order rhetoric has struck a chord with voters frustrated by rising crime in some areas, though his rejection of data showing a decade-long decline in overall crime has drawn scrutiny.

Farage's insistence on overriding local councils to build new prisons on Army land has also raised eyebrows, with accusations of ignoring community concerns. His vision, while bold, faces significant hurdles, from diplomatic negotiations to financial realities, as Reform UK seeks to reshape Britain's approach to crime.