

Foreign Criminals Convicted in UK to Face Immediate Deportation

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A new deportation policy has been announced for foreign criminals convicted in the UK. It will apply in England and Wales and was confirmed on 9 August 2025. The plan aims to ease prison overcrowding and reduce taxpayer costs by allowing the removal of offenders straight after conviction, enabled through new legislation.

Under the legislation, offenders will no longer need to serve part of their sentence in Britain before removal, though exemptions will remain for those convicted of terrorism offences or serving life sentences. Prison governors will also have the power to block deportation if there are national security concerns.

Justice Secretary Shabana Mahmood said the policy will help to address the strain on the prison system, which is currently operating at nearly full capacity. Official figures show that foreign nationals make up around 12 per cent of the prison population, with each prison place costing an estimated £54,000 a year.

The reform builds on previous measures that reduced the proportion of a sentence that must be served in the UK before deportation. Last year, the threshold was cut from 50 per cent to 30 per cent under the Early Removal Scheme. A dedicated task force, backed by £5 million, has also been established to speed up deportations, with specialist staff deployed in almost 80 prisons.

According to government data, more than 5,000 foreign prisoners have been removed in the past year, representing a 21 per cent increase compared with the previous 12 months. The rise follows an expansion in charter flights for deportations and a redeployment of enforcement officers to prioritise these removals.

Supporters of the policy argue it is a common-sense approach that protects the public, reduces the financial burden on taxpayers, and frees up prison space for UK offenders. Critics, however, have raised concerns about whether deportations will always comply with human rights obligations.

Shadow Justice Secretary Robert Jenrick said the current human rights framework can still allow offenders to appeal and delay their removal, calling for further legal reforms to ensure deportations are swift and decisive.

Under the new policy, deportation will take place as soon as possible after conviction for most offenders. For the government, this marks a shift from treating deportation as an end-of-sentence measure to making it an immediate part of the justice process.

The policy is expected to come into force later this year, with ministers confident it will both ease pressure on the prison system and send a clear message that foreign nationals who commit crimes in the UK will not serve their sentences here.