

Foreign Criminals to Face Immediate Deportation After Sentencing

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Foreign criminals in the UK will face immediate deportation following custodial sentences under new proposals announced by the Justice Secretary.

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) confirmed that individuals given fixed-term sentences could be deported immediately and barred from re-entering the UK. Whether offenders serve their

sentences abroad will be decided by the destination country, meaning some may be released upon arrival.

Foreign nationals currently make up around 12% of the prison population, with the average annual cost per prisoner estimated at £54,000. The government states that the new measures will save taxpayer money and enhance public protection.

Individuals serving life sentences, including terrorists and murderers, will complete their full prison term in the UK before being considered for deportation.

Once a judge issues a custodial sentence, prison governors will determine whether the offender is eligible for deportation. Authorities may keep criminals in custody if they pose a threat to national security or are suspected of planning further offences against the UK.

The MoJ's definition of a foreign national aligns with the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act.

If approved by Parliament, the legislation could apply to those already imprisoned, allowing deportations to commence immediately. As of January 2024, approximately 10,400 foreign nationals were held in UK prisons.

Justice Secretary Shabana Mahmood stated that foreign criminals who “abuse our hospitality and break our laws” will be sent “packing.” She added that deportations are increasing under the current government and will occur earlier and more rapidly if the new law passes.

Shadow Justice Secretary Robert Jenrick criticised the proposals, cautioning that some countries might refuse to accept deported nationals. He urged the government to consider suspending visas and foreign aid if countries decline to cooperate.

This announcement follows a legal change in June, expected to come into effect in September, reducing the threshold for deportation from halfway through a sentence to 30%. The government now seeks parliamentary approval to reduce this further to immediate deportation upon sentencing.