

## Britain's New Plan to Tackle Overcrowded Prisons: Deport Foreign Offenders Earlier

In a bold move to address the mounting pressure on Britain's overcrowded prisons, the government is pushing forward with a new plan to deport foreign prisoners earlier than ever before. Under the proposed changes, foreign nationals could be removed from the UK after serving just one-third of their sentence, rather than the current halfway point. In some cases, deportation could occur even sooner, potentially after as little as 12% of a sentence is served. This approach marks a major shift in how Britain deals with foreign offenders, aiming to ease pressure on the prison system and reduce taxpayer costs.

Currently, around 12% of the prison population in England and Wales consists of foreign nationals, amounting to more than 10,000 inmates. With prisons nearing capacity and the cost of holding each inmate estimated at over £47,000 per year, the government argues that early deportation is a practical solution. Ministers believe this strategy will not only save money but also free up thousands of cells urgently needed for domestic cases. The plan also includes incentives, such as offering up to £1,500 to prisoners and their families to encourage voluntary return to their home countries.

A GB News segment featuring former Justice Secretary David Gauke highlighted the potential benefits and pitfalls of the plan. While the cost-saving measures are clear, critics warn of serious risks to justice and fairness. Some fear the emergence of a two-tier system, where foreign offenders are treated more leniently simply because they are not British citizens. Human rights advocates also raise concerns, particularly in cases where deportation might separate families or violate individual rights under UK and international law.

The strategy depends heavily on international cooperation. The UK has existing prisoner transfer agreements with countries like Albania, Poland, and several EU nations, but these are often slow to enforce. For example, despite a formal deal, only a small number of Albanian prisoners have been transferred back. The government plans to expand these agreements and speed up processes through increased staffing and streamlined procedures.

Ultimately, this proposal reflects a growing urgency in the government to deal with a stretched criminal justice system. While many see early deportation as a necessary step to relieve overcrowding and cut costs, others argue that the move could compromise fairness and the integrity of British justice. As the policy unfolds, the balance between public interest, human rights, and practical enforcement will be closely watched.