

UK prisons facing serious overcrowding crisis

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The new government in the UK is having to deal with a serious crisis in its prison system. The new Labour administration made the decision on Friday to release thousands of prisoners before the convicts had finished serving their sentence. Prime Minister

Sir Keir Starmer attributed the mess in Britain's prisons service to a decade of neglect and underinvestment under the previous Conservative Party, which had been in power for 14 years. The prisoner population is nearly at capacity. Inmates are having to be released early to accommodate newly-sentenced felons. Some will be released having served just 40 per cent of their time. Mr Starmer said the problem was "pretty unforgivable, in my book".

The UK's justice secretary, Shabana Mahmood, warned of a "total breakdown in law and order" if prisons reached capacity. Ms Mahmood said: "Prisons are on the point of collapse". If space ran out, there would be nowhere to put those arrested or newly sentenced. The justice system would be overloaded. Mahmood said there would be "looters running amok, smashing windows, robbing shops and setting neighbourhoods alight". There are currently only 1,451 places available. She blamed former leader Rishi Sunak and prisons ministers for a "dereliction of duty" and for decimating the system. She called them: "The guilty men who put their political careers ahead of the safety and security of our country."

Sources: [nytimes.com](https://www.nytimes.com) / [theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com) / [abcnews.go.com](https://www.abcnews.go.com)

Writing

Prison is the best way to deal with criminals. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

government / crisis / prison / prisoners / neglect / underinvestment / power / book / justice / law and order / looters / running amok / leader / duty / guilty / careers

True / False

- 1) The UK government has released over 10,000 prisoners. T / F
- 2) The UK's leader accused the previous administration of neglect. T / F
- 3) Prisoners are being released to make way for newer convicts. T / F
- 4) The UK's leader wrote a book about the prison service crisis. T / F
- 5) There could be a total breakdown of law and order in the UK. T / F
- 6) The UK's justice secretary said Britain's prison system has collapsed. T / F
- 7) There are fewer than 1,500 places available in the UK's prisons. T / F
- 8) The UK's justice secretary blamed career politicians for the mess. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. deal with | a. ablaze / on fire |
| 2. release | b. fail to look after |
| 3. neglect | c. collapse |
| 4. nearly | d. inexcusable |
| 5. unforgivable | e. destroying |
| 6. breakdown | f. set free |
| 7. overloaded | g. culpable |
| 8. alight | h. more or less |
| 9. decimating | i. swamped |
| 10. guilty | j. manage |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) What do you know about prisons in your country?
- c) How is law and order in your country?
- d) What would you do if there was a breakdown in law and order?
- e) What should happen to looters who run amok?
- f) Are prisons a deterrent to would-be criminals?
- g) How are the politicians in your country?
- h) What questions would you like to ask the prisons minister?

Phrase Match

- before the convicts had finished serving
- a decade of neglect and
- The prisoner population is nearly at
- released having served just
- Starmer said the problem was pretty
- a total breakdown
- Prisons are on the point
- there would be looters running
- a dereliction
- political
- of collapse
- unforgivable
- careers
- in law and order
- underinvestment
- amok
- 40 per cent of their time
- of duty
- their sentence
- capacity

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think of prisons?
- How good are prisons at rehabilitating prisoners?
- Is prison a good punishment?
- How many people should be in a prison cell?
- How scary would it be to be in prison?
- What are the alternatives to prison?
- What happens when there are no more places to put convicts?
- What advice do you have for Sir Keir Starmer?

Spelling

- The new Labour riodtaiinmstna
- before the ncosvtci had finished
- a decade of engetcl
- nearly at citcpaay
- mdacomtcao newly-sentenced felons
- pretty fgrnelioubav
- The UK's ctseuji secretary
- on the point of lcsolpea
- looters running kmao
- setting osighudrhneobo alight
- a noiricedlet of duty
- andeciimtq the system

Answers – Synonym Match

1. j	2. f	3. b	4. h	5. d
6. c	7. i	8. a	9. e	10. g

Role Play

Role A – Bigamy

You think bigamy is the worst crime. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their crimes aren't as bad. Also, tell the others which is the least serious of these (and why): shoplifting, bank fraud or copyright theft.

Role B – Shoplifting

You think shoplifting is the worst crime. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their crimes aren't as bad. Also, tell the others which is the least serious of these (and why): bigamy, bank fraud or copyright theft.

Role C – Bank Fraud

You think bank fraud is the worst crime. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their crimes aren't as bad. Also, tell the others which is the least serious of these (and why): shoplifting, bigamy or copyright theft.

Role D – Copyright Theft

You think copyright theft is the worst crime. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their crimes aren't as bad. Also, tell the others which is the least serious of these (and why): shoplifting, bank fraud or bigamy.

Speaking – Crimes

Rank these with your partner. Put the worst crimes at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- Assault
- Bigamy
- Shoplifting
- Auto theft
- Bank fraud
- Blackmail
- Cybercrime
- Copyright theft

Answers – True False

1	F	2	T	3	T	4	F	5	T	6	F	7	T	8	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.