

Terrorist Offenders (Restriction of Early Release) Bill

Introduction

1. Protecting the public is a primary duty of government and the most recent incident in Streatham highlighted a need for immediate action to end the automatic release of terrorist offenders before the end of their sentence and introduce Parole Board oversight where it did not already exist.
2. Terrorist offenders can receive a variety of sentences depending on the offence committed, and the court's assessment of their dangerousness. The very worst offenders will receive a life sentence. Those assessed by the courts as dangerous may receive an extended determinate sentence, under which they may be considered for release by the Parole Board once they have served two-thirds of their sentence. This Bill will not change their arrangements.
3. Many terrorist offenders receive a standard determinate sentence, where offenders are currently automatically released from custody once they have served one half of their sentence. They continue to serve the remainder of their sentence on licence in the community, under probation supervision. Others may receive a sentence for offenders of particular concern (SOPC), under which prisoners are currently referred for consideration for release on licence by the Parole Board once they have served one half of their sentence.

What are the proposed changes?

4. The purpose of the Terrorist Offenders (Restriction of Early Release) Bill is to ensure terrorist offenders are not automatically released before the end of their sentence (or custodial term).
5. The provisions in the Bill standardise the first eligible release point for offenders who have committed a relevant terrorist offence or an offence with a terrorist connection to the two-thirds point of their sentence. Moving the release point to two-thirds is consistent with other release points for similar types of offenders and provides a greater period of incapacitation (one of the underlying reasons for terrorist sentencing).
6. The Bill also introduces a requirement for the release of all such offenders before the end of their sentence (or custodial term) to be decided by the Parole Board based on an assessment of risk.
7. The Bill will apply to relevant offenders currently serving a custodial sentence for an applicable terrorist or terror-related offence, as well as future terrorist offenders who receive a standard determinate sentence or SOPC. It does not fundamentally alter the length or type of sentence imposed by the courts. They amend the release point which relates to the administration of the sentence, rather than impose any additional penalty.

Commencement

8. The powers in the Act will come into force on Royal Assent.