



Ministry
of Justice

Chris Philp MP
Parliamentary Under-
Secretary of State for
Justice and Minister for
London

All MPs
House of Commons
Westminster
London
SW1A 0AA

10th
February 2020

Dear Gillies,

THE TERRORIST OFFENDERS (RESTRICTION OF EARLY RELEASE) BILL

I am writing to inform you that the Government has introduced the Terrorist Offenders (Restriction of Early Release) Bill to the House of Commons.

The incidents at Fishmongers' Hall on 30 November 2019 and in Streatham on 2 February 2020 show that we are facing an unpredictable risk to public safety from released terrorist prisoners. Protecting the public is a primary duty of government and the 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 of early release where it did not already exist. This Bill complements provisions planned for the forthcoming Counter Terrorism (Sentencing and Release) Bill, which includes longer prison sentences and more money for the police. It is vital that we pass this legislation rapidly, before further terrorist offenders are released from prison.

The main objective of the Bill is to ensure terrorist offenders are not automatically released before the end of their sentence (or custodial term). Currently, terrorist offenders can receive a variety of sentences depending on the offence committed, and the court's assessment of their dangerousness. Only 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. However, 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.

The provisions in the Bill standardise the first eligible release point of offenders who have committed a relevant terrorism 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). 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.

The Bill will apply to relevant offenders currently serving a custodial sentence for an applicable terrorist or terror-related offence, as well future terrorist offenders who receive a standard determinate sentence or Sentence Of Particular Concern. They do 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.

If you would like to discuss the Bill further, or have any questions, then please do get in touch with my Private Secretary, Rebecca Fynn at: (PrivateOffice.ChrisPhilp@justice.gov.uk).

with best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris Philp', written in a cursive style.

CHRIS PHILP MP