
COVID-19 Coronavirus: UK, Catholic Bishops back plan to release prisoners to ease pressure on jails

(London) The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales fully supports the British Government's plan to release hundreds of prisoners. This will help ease the pressure that COVID-19 will have on British prisons. Bishop Richard Moth, spokesman for the bishops in this area, said in a statement: "it is very encouraging that ministers are considering releasing some prisoners to protect the most vulnerable. Given the rate at which COVID-19 is spreading, this should be done as soon and safely as possible". A few days ago, the Government announced it was planning to extend a scheme which allows some inmates jailed for less than four years to be released before the halfway point of their sentence. There are approximately 95,000 prisoners in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and the scheme the Government is planning to extend would apply to 2,718 prisoners. 600 of them would be released. According to the BBC, the Ministry of Justice is also considering allowing prisoners to have more frequent contacts with their families to help ease their isolation. The Bishops' Conference has launched an appeal particularly for older people and pregnant women in jail.

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