

Press release: New measures to allow ratification of Istanbul Convention

The government will introduce new measures to protect women and girls from crimes committed overseas as part of its Domestic Abuse Bill.

The new legislation would be the final step to enable ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women, known as the Istanbul Convention.

Measures to be included in legislation will extend 'extra-territorial jurisdiction' so that certain offences committed by British citizens can be prosecuted in UK courts regardless of where they take place in the world.

Home Secretary, Amber Rudd said:

Domestic abuse has a devastating and life-long impact on victims, their children, family and friends and this government is determined to eradicate it.

These measures will help us bring justice to women who experience these abhorrent crimes anywhere in the world and shows perpetrators there is nowhere to hide.

This government has always been clear that we will ratify the Istanbul Convention and a Domestic Abuse Bill will allow us to deliver on that, demonstrating how we are driving international action to end violence against women.

Lord Chancellor and Justice Secretary David Lidington said:

We must do all we can to prevent Domestic Abuse and provide the very best support to victims.

That is why we are determined that those who commit these deplorable crimes feel the full force of the law.

This Government is committed to delivering a system that protects victims and increases convictions.

Despite record numbers of prosecutions and convictions, there are still two million victims of domestic abuse every year in England and Wales.

Though the UK already complies with most aspects of the Istanbul Convention in the United Kingdom, legislation is required for extra-territorial jurisdiction to cover offences committed by British citizens overseas. This will be included in a Domestic Abuse Bill.

The Prime Minister announced her intention to introduce a draft Domestic Abuse Bill earlier this year to ensure that victims have the confidence to come forward safe in the knowledge that the state and justice system will do everything it can to both support them and their children, and pursue their abuser. The Queen's Speech set out how a draft Bill will establish a Domestic Violence and Abuse Commissioner, define domestic abuse in law, and ensure that if abusive behaviour involves a child, the court can hand down a sentence that reflects the devastating life-long impact that abuse can have on them.

This government has introduced new laws and tools to protect victims of violence against women and girls including the criminalisation of forced marriage; two new stalking laws; the national roll-out of Domestic Violence Protection Orders and the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme; and a new offence of domestic abuse covering controlling and coercive behaviour. To support our commitment to tackling VAWG, we have pledged increased funding of £100 million until 2020.

In most respects we are already compliant with, or go further than, the convention requires, but there remains one outstanding issue in relation to extra-territorial jurisdiction (ETJ) which must be addressed. Article 44 requires that all signatories take the necessary legislative measures to establish ETJ over any offence established in accordance with the convention.

There are still a number of these offences, including rape of an over 18 and sexual assault where ETJ does not yet apply. For this, further amendments to domestic law are necessary to comply and will require primary legislation to be introduced in England and Wales, as well as in Scotland and Northern Ireland. We will seek to do this for England and Wales through a Domestic Abuse Bill.