

## **Home Secretary Theresa May Unveils Three Part Strategy To Tackle Gang Culture But Labour Says Its Empty Rhetoric**

The coalition government aims to drastically reduce the number of young people killed or seriously injured in gang violence by 2015, the Home Secretary Theresa May told MPs yesterday in the House of Commons, as she laid out a three part strategy to combat gang culture in the UK.

The strategy would aim to prevent people from joining gangs in the first place as well as help those involved to get out of gangs. And if all fails, the strategy wants the criminal justice system to deliver exemplary punishments for being part of gangs. Those who trade in guns could find themselves service life sentences in jail, Mrs. May told MPs. The government's initiative comes following the summer riots in England and has been welcomed across party lines. But Shadow Home Secretary Yvette Cooper warned that the government's cuts would most likely make this strategy nothing but empty rhetoric.

Under the plans, the government would set up a 100 member expert taskforce to provide pragmatic support and advice to local areas on combating gang culture. "For too long communities have lived in fear of gangs. Many young lives have been ruined; many young lives have been lost," the Home Secretary said arguing its "time for society to take a stand".

The focus would be on prevention and helping those that already involved to get out which meant may be providing additional support to parents. "It may be support to parents in terms of how they bring up a child," Mrs. May said. "For youngsters at school it may be identifying those who look as if they might become gang members, helping to prevent that happening and offering them pathways out if they do become a gang member."

There would also be attention on providing support to girls who are often victims of gang violence including rape. At the same time, the government would ensure those continuing to participate in gangs face tough sentences such as those carrying a knife would receive an automatic custodial sentence.

But Labour's Yvette Cooper said despite this strategy "youth crime" would rise due to the government's strategy of cutting "too far too fast".

"The Government is cutting too far and too fast and it is hitting our criminal justice system but also our economy too and that risks costing us more," she said. "Higher unemployment and higher crime will all cost us more."