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Warnings of collapse in law and order within weeks... as 20,000 inmates are set for early release to free up cells

By **David Barrett** Home Affairs Editor

**CLAIMS** that the prisons crisis could trigger a breakdown of law and order within weeks were blasted by the Tories as 'shame-

less scaremongering' last night.
Justice Secretary Shabana Mahmood will today unveil a series of measures granting early release to thousands of inmates which she will say are necessary to avert 'unchecked criminality on our streets'.

Officials suggested criminals would run amok if the jails reached maximum capacity and were left unable to accept new prisoners.

But the Conservatives accused the Govern-

ment of deploying scare tactics. A senior Tory source said: 'This is shameless scaremongering from the Labour Party that risks causing mass panic.

'Labour have come into government with hundreds of prison places available – but they've lost their nerve, and are now stoking

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