# The role of prisons– Transcript

***What is the role of prison?***

**Kenny MacAskill**: The first role of prison is to keep people safe and secure. I've never thought that retribution… You'll get people, usually Daily Mail something like that, who say within prison they should be given bread and porridge, they should break rocks or all these things, but at the end of the day prison is about a deprivation of your liberty.

If you were in prison at the moment you might be in a hall speaking to me but you will not get out that door unless the warder allows you. You won't be going home. You won't get the choice to watch the football tomorrow, to go away or do anything else. You won't be home for Christmas. You won't get visitors in for Christmas, so prison is about the deprivation of your liberty, which actually, when you think about it, you do get the Daily Mail saying: 'Well, it's dead easy. They're all sitting in prison doing handstands, having a life of Riley.' It isn't like that.

When you can't see your son, if you've got one, or your mum, or your dad. Or you're feeling low and they say: 'Well there will be a visit in 4 weeks.' Or you would like to watch this and that and they will say : 'No, that's not on.' So fundamentally, it is a deprivation of your liberty.

I don't think we should go for retribution beyond that. That's why in Scotland prosecutions are brought back by the Crown in the public interest.

Something has happened. The Crown say: 'This is unacceptable to us. We have to make recompense to the person who suffered.'

So the retribution has to be dealt with proportionally. It has to be dealt with humanely and those who say we should lock them up and do this… Whether it's put wasp in a jar and shake it around… If you have a dog and you poke it with a stick, when people come out of prison, as they do, do you want it like that wasp out of a jar, do you want it like that dog that comes off the leash or do you want like: 'I never want to come back here and I'm glad the staff have worked with me so that I can get a job'?

So the retribution comes through the punishment. Beyond that, what we should try to do is work out what we can do to reform them. So it's about security and reform.

 [End of transcript]