

Britain to remove some DNA profiles from database

May 7 2009

(AP) -- Britain said Thursday it will set up a system to remove details about the DNA of innocent people from its nationwide registry of genetic information - but it could take up to 12 years for some of that information to be erased.

Europe's top [human rights](#) court has criticized the way Britain retains personal information.

Home Secretary Jacqui Smith said authorities would wipe out DNA and fingerprint samples of people who are arrested but not convicted of most crimes after six years. Those arrested for serious crimes, including sexual violence and terrorism, will only have their details removed after twelve years, even if they are not convicted.

The government was forced to change the way it takes and stores [genetic information](#) after the European Court of [Human Rights](#) ruled in December that keeping [DNA samples](#) and fingerprints violated a person's right to a private life - a protection under the Human Rights Convention that the United Kingdom has signed.

The court also criticized Britain's use of "blanket and indiscriminate" storage.

The Home Office said 5.2 per cent of the country's population is on the national DNA database, compared with just 0.5 per cent in the U.S. It said it did not know how many would be affected by the new proposal,

which will come into effect later this year, but opposition lawmakers suggest that over 800,000 profiles will be removed.

The National DNA Database Strategy Board, made up of police associations and government representatives, will keep the power to oversee how the database is used and managed.

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