

Canada must strengthen immigration security and close screening, enforcement gaps

By **Sergio R. Karas**

Law360 Canada (March 25, 2026, 12:10 PM EDT) -- Recent reporting has raised concerns about the effectiveness of Canada's immigration security screening and enforcement. Media accounts have described cases in which an individual allegedly appearing in an ISIS execution video later obtained refugee status and citizenship before being arrested in connection with an alleged plot in Toronto; a foreign national with a prior conviction for sexual offences entered on a visitor visa after failing to disclose that history; and individuals linked to the Iranian regime have entered and, in some cases, obtained status in Canada.

Collectively, these cases point to potential weaknesses in screening, information-sharing and follow-through among the agencies responsible for vetting and removals.

Illustrative cases and identified gaps

One frequently cited example is Ahmed Eldidi, a 62-year-old Egyptian national who arrived in 2018, claimed asylum and was granted refugee status within a year. He became a Canadian citizen by 2024, despite subsequent reporting that he may have appeared in an ISIS beheading video filmed before his arrival in Canada.

In July 2024, Eldidi and his son were arrested in connection with an alleged ISIS-inspired mass-casualty plot in Toronto. Reporting indicated the video was later located online, and parliamentary testimony stated the department was "unaware" of the video when the file was assessed. The case suggests gaps in access to relevant intelligence and in escalation and coordination across immigration screening, refugee processing and citizenship security review.

A second case involves Gullfam Hussain (*Hussain v. Canada (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration)*, 2025 FC 1581), a Pakistani national convicted in the United Kingdom for sexual abuse offences. Reporting indicates he obtained a Canadian visitor visa in 2023 by applying from Spain and not disclosing his criminal record. Subsequent reporting states that after arriving in Canada he reconnected with the victim and fathered a child. In 2024, a Federal Court ordered his deportation and characterized the matter as a serious warning about screening effectiveness, though he reportedly remained in Canada while pursuing further legal processes, including risk-related arguments. The case underscores the importance of robust front-end verification and timely, enforceable removals once inadmissibility is established.

Concerns have been raised about Iranian regime-linked individuals present in Canada, alongside a federal policy intended to restrict entry to senior Iranian regime members from the past 20 years. Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) is apparently reviewing 95 suspected regime-linked individuals in Canada, and only one deportation of a senior Iranian official has occurred in the last three years. Related coverage has also referenced intimidation and threats on Canadian soil and the disruption of multiple plots to harm individuals in Canada. These accounts highlight the need for clear criteria, consistent application of inadmissibility provisions and effective enforcement in national security cases.

Structural challenges in screening and enforcement



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Across these examples, recurring issues include capacity constraints and uneven coordination. Application volumes have increased, while resources have not kept pace; a senior immigration official described the situation as “trying to put out a building fire with a bucket of water.” Responsibilities are spread across multiple federal agencies, and information-sharing is not consistently effective. Volume pressures may lead to superficial screening and security compromises, including fewer interviews and greater reliance on standardized processing. Stakeholders have also raised concerns about reliance on self-reported foreign police certificates and limited access to foreign data sources. When inadmissibility is found, procedural timelines and appeals can delay removals and affect confidence in enforcement.

Enforcement capacity has also been described as constrained. Reporting indicates more than 33,000 people with removal orders are currently in Canada, and over 10,000 related warrants have been outstanding for a year or more. Even with 16,000-plus removals last year, the overall inventory grew to nearly half a million outstanding deportation orders by late 2024, including 30,000 people whose whereabouts are unknown. Coverage has noted this population can include individuals with serious criminal histories. A recent OMNI-Leger poll found 82 per cent of newcomers support faster deportation of non-citizens who commit serious crimes.

Policy options to strengthen screening and removals

Canada can strengthen immigration security while maintaining program accessibility by improving risk management. A first priority is clearer governance *and* better information-sharing across CBSA, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Canadian Security Intelligence Service and the RCMP, so relevant intelligence is identified and escalated consistently. Proposals include a more unified immigration security command or lead authority, similar to peer models, supported by modern technology and real-time data-sharing at each stage of processing.

A second priority is to restore rigour in front-end screening, especially for higher-risk files, including targeted interviews, stronger document validation and clear escalation paths when “available data” is limited. This may require additional staffing, training and specialized capacity; reporting noted reductions in some areas despite rising demand. The government’s pledge to add 1,000 CBSA officers over three years is a constructive step.

A third priority is to reduce enforcement delays once inadmissibility is identified. Options include fast-tracking higher-risk removal cases, reviewing appeal pathways to prevent unnecessary delay and using proportionate compliance measures (e.g., reporting conditions or electronic monitoring) to reduce absconding risk while removals are pending. Where cooperation from foreign governments is limited, policy and diplomatic approaches may be needed to support lawful removals.

Canada’s immigration system is recognized for openness and humanitarian commitments, but sustained public confidence also depends on credible screening and effective enforcement. Priorities include modernizing and integrating vetting, reducing reliance on self-attestation where risk indicators exist and investing in capacity to address backlogs and locate individuals who evade removal orders.

Effective immigration security depends on continuous risk identification, inter-agency coordination and measurable enforcement outcomes. Strengthening these elements can improve public safety and reinforce confidence in the integrity of the system.

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