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This is not a marginal problem. It is a systemic failure that undermines trust in immigration enforcement and raises legitimate public safety concerns.

At the core of the problem is a legal framework layered with procedural protections. Under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA), individuals facing removal have access to multiple avenues of appeal, administrative deferrals, and humanitarian applications. Each step can pause enforcement, sometimes for years.

The Supreme Court of Canada has continued to expand access to appeals. In *Pepa v. Canada (Citizenship and Immigration)*, 2025 SCC 21 (CanLII), the Court reinforced that removal orders can be challenged flexibly and even beyond strict deadlines, in the name of fairness. While admirable in principle, such rulings inevitably prolong proceedings.

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Even determining whether a person qualifies for deportation can be complicated. The Supreme Court has also held that deportation on "security grounds" requires a clear nexus to national security, narrowing government discretion. In other words, not all violent or troubling conduct is enough.

In practice, this means that deportation is rarely swift or certain.

Canada is deporting more people than before — but it is also losing control of the system.

The Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) removed over 18,000 inadmissible individuals in 2024–2025, the highest number in a decade. Yet at the same time, the inventory of outstanding removal cases has ballooned to more than 20,000.

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Several recent categories of cases illustrate how Canada's deportation regime struggles to function effectively:

Criminal networks — some removals, many gaps

Authorities have recently deported dozens of foreign nationals linked to organized extortion networks in British Columbia. In 2026 alone, more than 90 [illegible] have acknowledged hundreds of such individuals, including serious offenders, who have slipped through the cracks and remain at large.

This raises a basic question: what is the value of a removal order that cannot be enforced?

Deportation orders delayed or halted at the last minute

Even when removal is imminent, political or legal interventions can derail the process. In March 2026, the federal government halted the deportation of a Montreal father and child days before removal, citing humanitarian concerns.

While such interventions may be justified in individual cases, they contribute to a broader perception that deportation orders are provisional rather than final.

- **Limited detention powers:** Immigration detention is used sparingly and is subject to strict review, increasing the risk that individuals abscond.

The result is a system where enforcement is reactive, not proactive.

There is also a growing disconnect between political rhetoric and operational reality.

Recent federal statements emphasize prioritizing the removal of foreign criminals and strengthening enforcement. The CBSA is even targeting roughly 20,000 removals annually.

Yet these efforts are overwhelmed by systemic inefficiencies and legal constraints. Increasing deportation targets does little if the underlying machinery cannot deliver timely results.

Public confidence in the immigration system depends not only on who is admitted, but on whether the rules are enforced once violated.

Canada does not lack laws authorizing deportation. It lacks a system that can execute them efficiently.

Reform should focus on three priorities:

1. **Streamlining appeals and limiting abuse of process**
   While due process is essential, endless litigation undermines enforcement. Clear timelines and stricter thresholds for appeals are needed.
2. **Strengthening detention and tracking mechanisms**
   Individuals under removal orders — particularly those with criminal records — must be effectively monitored to prevent absconding.
3. **Enhancing international cooperation**

Until Canada restores balance — preserving fairness while ensuring that removal orders mean removal — the gap between law and reality will continue to grow. And so will the risks.

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