

# Canada to dramatically hike, expedite deportations to “secure” borders

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In the name of “securing” Canada’s borders, the Justin Trudeau-led Liberal government has ordered the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) to expel 10,000 migrants—the overwhelming majority of them people fleeing poverty and oppression—by March 2019.

The Liberals’ drive to dramatically hike and expedite deportations represents an intensification of its right-wing, anti-immigrant agenda and will further embolden the most reactionary political forces, including Ontario Premier Doug Ford, the new Coalition Avenir Quebec (CAQ) government in Quebec, and outright fascist groups.

The order was outlined in an e-mail from a senior government official that was leaked to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) the same week US President Donald Trump vowed to send 15,000 soldiers to the US-Mexico border and urged them to open fire on refugees fleeing poverty and violence in Central America. Not a single word of condemnation of these fascistic remarks has been forthcoming from Trudeau or his ministers. Instead, they are stepping up their collaboration with US authorities in policing the Canada-US border, including in seeking to prevent those fleeing Trump’s anti-immigrant witch-hunt from finding refuge in Canada.

The government e-mail confirmed a new annual target of 10,000 deportations, an increase of 35 percent. CBSA head Barry Campbell stated in the leaked e-mail: “To ensure that the CBSA is meeting its mandate under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to conduct removals as soon as possible, the agency is focused on increasing overall removal numbers for the current fiscal year and beyond.”

The deportation drive specifically targets refugee claimants who have crossed into Canada from the US, so as to send a chilling message to would-be migrants that Canada is no safe haven.

Prime Minister Trudeau has publicly endorsed the stepped-up expulsions, and in the most cynical manner. He told reporters his government is seeking to “improve the immigration system” by having it “more rapidly deal with files.” For his part, Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale

termed the deportation drive as “necessary” and urged the CBSA to “pick up the pace.”

The Liberals’ anti-immigrant witch-hunt should come as no surprise. Notwithstanding their posturing as pro-refugee and the attempt of much the media to portray them as a “progressive” alternative to the xenophobia of the Conservatives and far-right forces, the Liberals have responded to a surge in refugee claimants entering Canada overland from the US with hostility and callousness.

For starters, the Trudeau government has defended the reactionary Canada-US Safe Third Country agreement to the hilt. Under this agreement, persons fearing persecution in the United States who seek to enter Canada at an official border checkpoint are automatically denied the right to file for asylum and immediately returned to the US, on the grounds that it is a “safe” country for refugees.

It is the government’s refusal to abrogate the Safe Third Country agreement that has led some 40,000 asylum-seekers to enter Canada in 2017-2018 irregularly, because if they do, Ottawa is compelled under international law to hear their claims for refugee status.

Not only has this meant that asylum-seekers have often had to cross into Canada under highly dangerous and even life-threatening conditions. The right and ultra-right have seized on their having crossed into Canada outside an official border crossing to smear them as “illegals” and “law-breakers.”

Similarly, in order to dissuade others from joining them, the government has refused to provide the asylum-seekers with adequate resources, leading then to turn to food banks and emergency shelters. The right and far-right have then seized on this to scapegoat the refugees, denouncing them for taxing scant social services.

The Liberals’ harsh treatment of the refugee claimants is in keeping with the character of Canada’s immigration system as whole, which is highly restrictive, having been tailored to meet the needs of Canadian big business.

Whilst the media endlessly promotes Canada’s “progressive” immigration system, it has received plaudits

from some of the most reactionary political figures on the planet. This includes Trump, who has proclaimed Ottawa's points-based immigration system an example worth following. Another proponent of the "Canadian model" is Alice Weidel, a leader of the fascistic Alternative for Germany (AfD), which combines a far-right xenophobic and nationalist program with the trivialization of the crimes carried out by Hitler and the Nazis.

Throughout Trump's two-year presidency, the Trudeau government has studiously avoided making any criticism of his vendetta against immigrants. This is a calculated decision that human rights concerns and international law must not be allowed to get in the way of the Canadian bourgeoisie's strategic interest in maintaining and deepening its decades-long economic and military partnership with Washington and Wall Street. This was summed up by the *Globe and Mail*, the traditional mouthpiece of the Canada's financial elite, which declared soon after Trump was elected that it was necessary for Canada to be behind "Trump's walls."

This was not only an explicit reference to Trump's reactionary demand for a border wall with Mexico. It also expressed the desire of the Canadian ruling elite to align itself even more closely with Washington in upholding North American global dominance through trade war and, if need be, military conflict with their common geostrategic and economic rivals—above all, Russia and China.

The Trudeau government has duly obliged. Immigration authorities in Canada collaborate intimately with the US Border Protection Agency and Department of Homeland Security, the very same agencies that are terrorizing immigrant communities across the country and mistreating children in concentration camp-like facilities. Moreover, Canada recently agreed to a renegotiated version of the North American Free Trade Agreement that makes it into a more explicit protectionist trade bloc. The Liberals have also integrated Canada still more completely into the US military-strategic offensives against Russia and China and have announced a more than 70 percent hike in military spending by 2026.

Over the past two decades, Canadian imperialism has participated in virtually every US-led war of aggression, from the bombardment of Yugoslavia to the occupation of Afghanistan, NATO's bloody air war on Libya, and the ongoing war in Syria and Iraq. Ottawa therefore bears a not insignificant share of the blame for the death and destruction throughout the Middle East and beyond that has forced tens of millions to become refugees.

The Liberals' shift right is part of a broader lurch toward reaction on the part of the entire Canadian establishment, rooted in the eruption of trade war, the surge in global geopolitical tensions, and above all, the growth of social

opposition in the working class.

Former Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper has just published a book in which he defends Trump and proclaims "rightwing populism" a necessary antidote to the danger of socialism.

Meanwhile, the Conservative official opposition is denouncing the Liberals' harsh treatment of refugees as woefully inadequate. The Conservatives are demanding the government designate the entire Canada-US border a "point of entry" under the Safe Third Country Agreement so Ottawa can automatically expel anyone who crosses into Canada from the US.

Ford's Progressive Conservative government in Ontario and Francois Legault's CAQ in Quebec have seized on the Liberals' plan to increase deportations to amplify their own demands for an even more sweeping clampdown.

The Ford government, which has been waging a foul campaign blaming refugees for Ontario's crumbling social services, including a lack of housing, stepped up this campaign following the CBC leak. According to an official Ontario government statement, the Trudeau government lacked "a credible plan" to deal with "illegal" border crossers. The statement cited Social Services Minister Lisa MacLeod, who asserted, without providing any evidence, that 40 percent of all homeless shelter occupants in Toronto are immigrants.

This reactionary campaign, which is designed to divert attention away from the responsibility of all political parties, from the NDP to the Conservatives, for decades of social spending cuts, is also being used to forge a base of support among the most backward political forces for the Ford government's sweeping assault on public spending. Ford has already imposed a hiring freeze on the public sector, vowed to cut billions from government spending, and rolled back an extremely modest minimum-wage increase.



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