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## Albanese Addresses Gaza Photo, Hints at Shift on Palestinian Statehood

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Prime Minister (PM) Anthony Albanese has responded to a viral photo of a starving child in Gaza, calling it “heartbreaking” and signaling a potential shift in Australia’s stance on recognizing a Palestinian state. While condemning Israel’s actions, he resists immediate recognition, citing security concerns, amid internal Labor Party pressure and global outrage over Gaza’s humanitarian crisis.

The image of an emaciated Gazan infant, widely shared on social media, prompted Albanese to label Israel’s aid restrictions a “clear breach of international law” on ABC’s

Insiders, stating, “A one-year-old boy is not a Hamas fighter.” He called Israel’s recent airdrops of aid a “start” but insufficient, with over 58,000 Palestinian deaths reported by Gaza health authorities. Critics, including Shadow Foreign Affairs Minister Michaelia Cash, argue Albanese fails to adequately condemn Hamas, a listed terrorist group, for initiating the conflict and disrupting aid. “Hamas must be held accountable,” Cash insisted on Sky News, accusing the PM of sidestepping the group’s role.

Albanese’s cautious pivot toward Palestinian statehood, part of Labor’s platform since 2018, faces resistance. He insists any recognition must exclude Hamas, ensure Israel’s security, and resolve issues like West Bank settlements. “We won’t act as a gesture,” he said, ruling out imminent recognition despite France’s move to do so. Former Labor Foreign Minister Bob Carr called Israel’s actions “unspeakable cruelty,” urging immediate recognition, a view echoed by Labor Friends of Palestine at Victoria’s state conference. Yet, Albanese’s hesitation, citing the need for U.S. involvement and a viable two-state solution, has drawn fire for being too timid.

The Gaza crisis, with two million facing starvation after Israel’s March aid blockade, has intensified global calls for action. Albanese’s government, under pressure from within and without, risks appearing out of step as nations like Spain and Ireland recognize Palestine. Colin Rubenstein of the Australia/Israel and Jewish Affairs Council warned that premature recognition could embolden Hamas, entrenching conflict. As the PM navigates this diplomatic tightrope, his response to Gaza’s suffering signals a shift but leaves Australia’s policy lagging behind bolder allies.