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Netanyahu Criticizes Albanese Over Australian Protests

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Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has criticized Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, warning that recent pro-Palestinian demonstrations highlight risks of antisemitism in Australia. His comments came after appeals from Australian Jewish leaders for moderation.

In an interview with Sky News, Netanyahu said protests in Sydney and Melbourne calling for a ceasefire should be firmly addressed by political leaders. He contrasted Australia's response with that of the United States, where he praised former President Donald Trump's stance on similar demonstrations. Netanyahu also criticized European governments for their approach to Israel during the conflict with Hamas.

Following Hamas's October 7 attacks on southern Israel, which killed about 1,200 people, the Gaza Health Ministry has reported more than 60,000 Palestinian deaths, including civilians, in continuing hostilities. Netanyahu cited the burning of a Melbourne synagogue in 2023 as evidence of antisemitic incidents requiring vigilance. He said small-scale attacks, if unchecked, can expand into wider threats to communities.

Netanyahu also criticized Albanese's decision to recognize a Palestinian state, comparing the policy to the appeasement of authoritarian regimes before World War II. He rejected claims that Israel is deliberately causing starvation in Gaza, stating that such accusations are false. Gaza authorities, however, reported additional deaths from hunger and malnutrition in recent days, with the United Nations warning of worsening conditions in the territory.

The Israeli leader reiterated that military operations in Gaza will continue until Hamas is removed and security for Israel is achieved. He did not specify when he would consider the threat resolved.

The 16-minute interview drew reactions in Australia. Daniel Aghion, president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, described Netanyahu's remarks as "inflammatory and provocative," saying they did not reflect Australia's political or social climate. Albanese has not escalated the dispute, instead stressing the importance of respectful engagement with foreign leaders.

Diplomatic strains have grown since Australia announced recognition of a Palestinian state earlier this month. Netanyahu sent letters to other world leaders who took similar steps, including French President Emmanuel Macron, who disputed the claims in those messages.

Recent developments include Australia's revocation of the visa of a far-right Israeli politician and Israel's reciprocal cancellation of visas for Australian representatives to the Palestinian Authority. The Australian government has also updated its travel advisory, urging officials to leave the West Bank due to limited consular services.

Netanyahu's remarks highlight the impact of international conflicts on domestic debate in Australia and the challenges for both governments in managing sensitive diplomatic and community issues.