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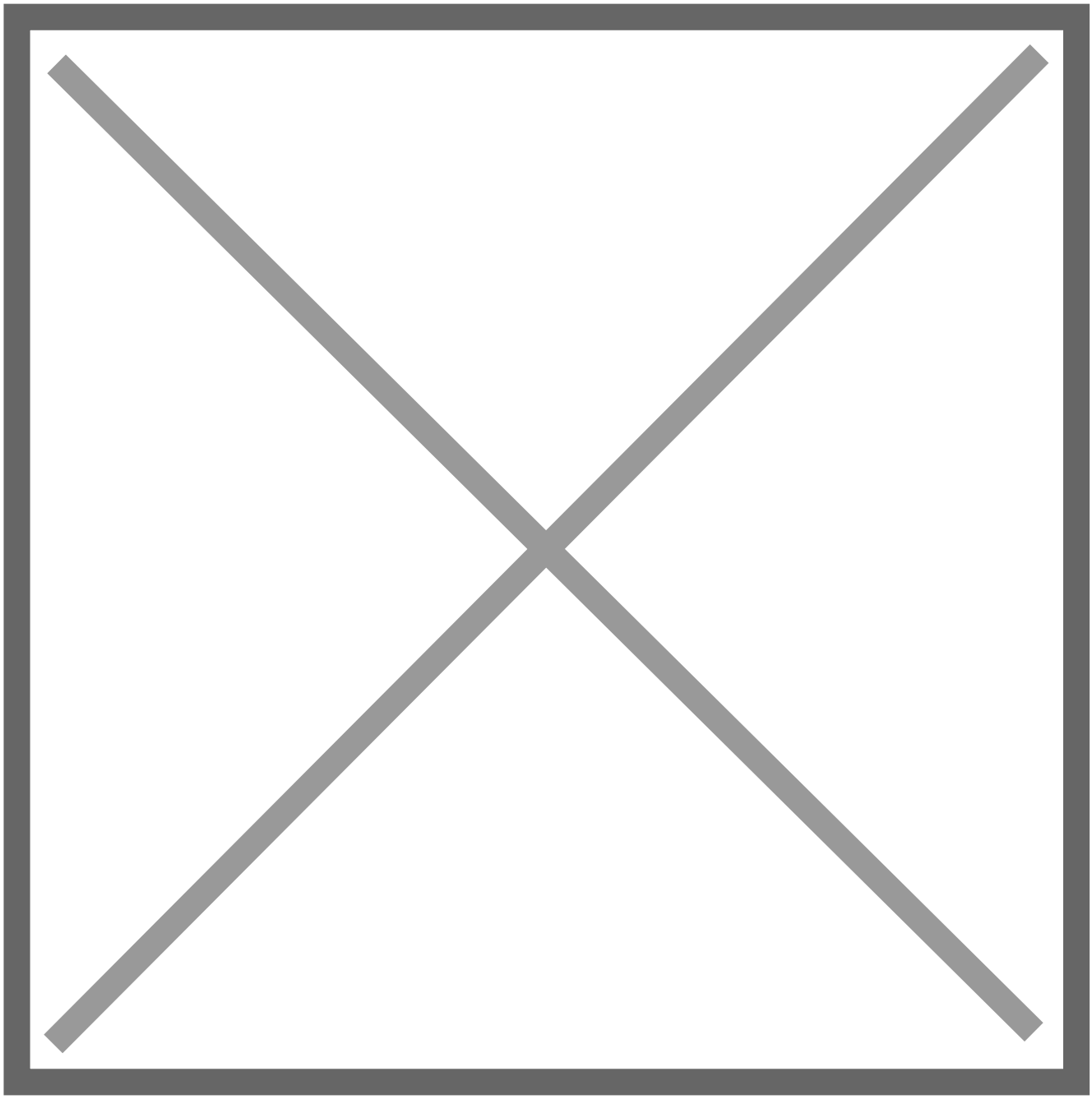

Members of the Pontifical Swiss Guard line up in the San Damaso Courtyard of the Apostolic Palace in this file photo from Oct. 4, 2025. (CNS/Vatican Media)

by Cindy Wooden, Catholic News Service

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Vatican City — November 10, 2025
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The Vatican press office confirmed the Pontifical Swiss Guard is investigating an incident involving one of the guards who has been accused of making an antisemitic gesture.

The incident was alleged to have occurred Oct. 29 as Jewish representatives made their way into St. Peter's Square for Pope Leo XIV's general audience, which was a celebration of the 60th anniversary of "Nostra Aetate," the Second Vatican Council declaration on relations with other religions.

"The matter is currently the subject of an internal investigation process, initiated in accordance with the procedures established for handling reports involving members of the Corps," the press office said Nov. 10. "This process is being conducted in compliance with the principles of confidentiality and impartiality, and in accordance with the applicable regulations."

"In keeping with its centuries-old tradition of service," the statement continued, "the Pontifical Swiss Guard reaffirms its constant commitment to ensuring that the fulfillment of its mission always takes place with full respect for the dignity of every person and the fundamental principles of equality and nondiscrimination."

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Vivian Liska, director of the Institute of Jewish Studies at the University of Antwerp, Belgium, told the Italian newspaper La Repubblica that she never expected news of the incident to go "viral."

"For me, it was an incident involving one individual who behaved badly, and that's all," she said Nov. 10. "It was indeed a rather shocking moment, but not of great significance if it isn't symptomatic of something bigger."

As they were entering the square, she said, one of the guards "said loudly, 'No photographs' — that was his job. And then, in a lower voice, almost as if speaking to himself, he said 'juifs,' Jews, and made a small gesture, as if to spit — he didn't actually spit on us, just made the gesture. It was very brief, just a second."

Fifteen minutes later, she said, an officer came over and apologized.

Liska said she later received a phone call from another official who said they had reviewed the footage from a security camera, but "the recordings don't capture what the Swiss Guard actually said — again, it was as if he were speaking to himself, in a low voice. The person on the phone apologized and said there would be consequences. In any case, it was a small incident involving a single individual, and I don't think it would be right for it to cast a negative light over those days."

A version of this story appeared in the **Nov 21-Dec 4, 2025** print issue under the headline: Vatican says Swiss Guards investigating alleged antisemitic gesture.