
Musk defends gesture amid backlash over Trump rally



Published on January 21, 2025

Document Date: Thu, Jan 01 2026 01:25:28 pm

Category: ,English,International - ,Snippets

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Elon Musk has sparked controversy following a one-armed gesture he made during a speech at the inauguration of Donald Trump. The world's richest man, who was addressing the crowd at Washington DC's Capital One Arena, thanked the audience for their support, then placed his hand over his heart before thrusting his arm forward. He repeated the motion for those sitting behind him.

Social media users quickly drew comparisons to a Nazi salute, prompting Musk to respond on X (formerly Twitter). “The ‘everyone is Hitler’ attack is sooo tired,” he wrote, dismissing the backlash.

Historians and experts were divided on the gesture’s meaning. Claire Aubin, a historian specializing in Nazism, called it a “sieghel” salute, while Ruth Ben-Ghiat, a New York University professor of fascism, labeled it a “very belligerent” Nazi salute. Andrea Stroppa, a close ally of Musk, later referred to it as a “Roman salute,” historically associated with the fascist Mussolini regime and later adopted by Nazi Germany.

Musk’s political alignment has increasingly veered rightward, and some have linked his gesture to his support for far-right political movements, including Germany’s AfD party. Musk’s spokesman later clarified that the gesture was simply an expression of his feelings, not an endorsement of extremism.

Defenders, such as the Anti-Defamation League, suggested Musk’s gesture was an awkward move during a moment of enthusiasm rather than a Nazi reference. The controversy underscores Musk’s growing influence in political and global discourse.