Culture



Nigerian American Catholic musician Ike Ndolo



by Stephanie Espinoza

View Author Profile

## Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

May 31, 2025

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

In the times we live in, it's easy to use art as an escape; something to soothe or distract. But that form of consumption leaves something wanting. What we really need is art that moves us, challenges us; we need art to call upon our humanity and remind us of our crucial interdependence.

History has given us the Paul Robesons and the Toni Morrisons, the James Baldwins and the June Jordans. What about today? Who are the revolutionary artists of our day who are speaking on liberation and solidarity?

Catholic singer-songwriter Ike Ndolo could be counted among them.

A Nigerian American artist based out of San Antonio, Ndolo is known best for his work as a Catholic worship leader, especially for youth ministry events around the country. But he is also an activist, leveraging his platform and his faith to point out the injustices that are too often met with silence in religious spaces.

> 'God is here, where are you?'
>
> Tweet this

One of Ndolo's most moving songs was inspired by a viral homily delivered by the Rev. Munther Isaac, pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem. "God," asserted Isaac, "is under the rubble in Gaza. He is with the frightened and the refugees. He is in the operating room. This is our consolation. He walks with us through the valley of the shadow of death."

The musician first introduced the song on an Instagram reel in December 2023, playing live in his own backyard. Under a dark night sky, Ndolo stood before the camera with only his voice and his guitar, singing about God's heart for the frightened and tormented in Gaza.

With this simple offering, Ndolo was one of the first (and, ultimately, few) public-facing Catholic musicians to make an unwavering statement about the horrors that were unfolding in Palestine.

Advertisement

This spring, "God in the Rubble" was released as the first single off of Ndolo's upcoming full-length album. The song was produced by Zorin McGuire and features performances by Devonte Coleman, Kemi Ndolo and James Salas. Artist Ramone Romero created the single's cover art, an original painting of the Christ child wrapped in a keffiyeh and lying in a manger, calling to mind the harrowing images of the injured and victimized children of Gaza.

The record begins with a simple guitar riff and Ndolo's voice on earnest display. It then builds to a chorus backed by keys. By the second verse, it has the full support of drums and bass to ask us: "God is here, where are you?" It's a searing indictment, with Ndolo calling us in and lending his voice to echo the sentiment of so many Palestinians who are wondering who will see their plight and end their suffering.

Ndolo has been honest about the limitations of this type of artistry, writing on Instagram that "the people of Gaza don't need songs they need peace, justice, restoration and freedom." Still, it is notable that all proceeds from the single will be redirected to fund mutual aid requests for individuals and families in Gaza, where humanitarian aid was blocked March 2 through late May.

Some say the key to artistry as revolution is to see no delineation between the art and the protest. If this is true, Ndolo is following in the footsteps of Robeson, Morrison, Baldwin and Jordan. In the song's bridge, Ndolo takes a common Palestinian liberation phrase and turns it into prayer: "From the river to the sea / We will be free / Free indeed."

All that's missing is our collective "amen," willing it so.