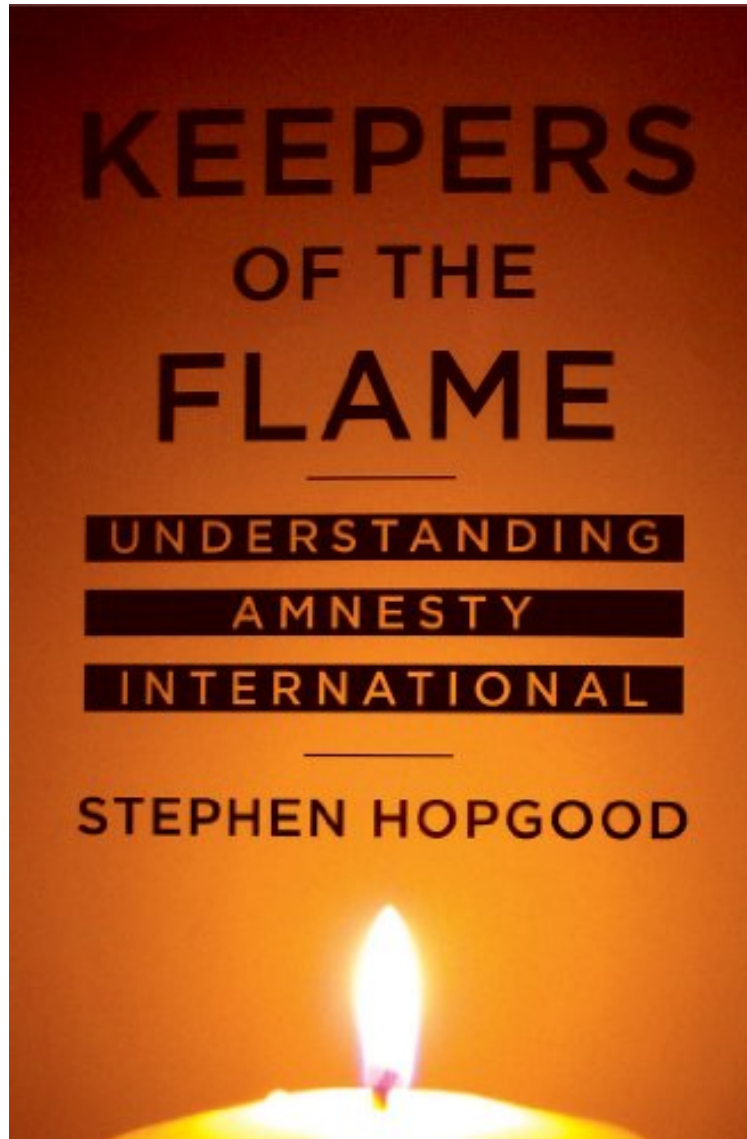


[Free] Keepers of the Flame: Understanding Amnesty International

Keepers of the Flame: Understanding Amnesty International

Stephen Hopgood

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Stephen Hopgood : Keepers of the Flame: Understanding Amnesty International before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Keepers of the Flame: Understanding Amnesty International:

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Most complete book on AI By J. Cockrell This is really the only book out there that explains Amnesty International in a complete and unbiased way. The author was allowed unprecedented access to the archives and inner-workings of AI which provided him with all kinds of interesting and unexpected information. The author was very clear about his personal opinions on the group and how they changed throughout his

experience of writing this book. It was perfect for a research paper- it's carefully cited and doesn't have the agenda that most of the books published on AI clearly contain. It is very difficult to find accurate information on AI since they seem to evoke such strong opinions, both for and against them. This book also does a good job of explaining several of their major campaigns in detail.

"If one organization is synonymous with keeping hope alive, even as a faint glimmer in the darkness of a prison, it is Amnesty International. Amnesty has been the light, and that light was truth—bearing witness to suffering hidden from the eyes of the world."—from *Keepers of the Flame*

The first in-depth look at working life inside a major human rights organization, *Keepers of the Flame* charts the history of Amnesty International and the development of its nerve center, the International Secretariat, over forty-five years. Through interviews with staff members, archival research, and unprecedented access to Amnesty International's internal meetings, Stephen Hopgood provides an engrossing and enlightening account of day-to-day operations within the organization, larger decisions about the nature of its mission, and struggles over the implementation of that mission. An enduring feature of Amnesty's inner life, Hopgood finds, has been a recurrent struggle between the "keepers of the flame" who seek to preserve Amnesty's accumulated store of moral authority and reformers who hope to change, modernize, and use that moral authority in ways that its protectors fear may erode the organization's uniqueness. He also explores how this concept of moral authority affects the working lives of the servants of such an ideal and the ways in which it can undermine an institution's political authority over time. Hopgood argues that human-rights activism is a social practice best understood as a secular religion where internal conflict between sacred and profane—the mission and the practicalities of everyday operations—are both unavoidable and necessary. *Keepers of the Flame* is vital reading for anyone interested in Amnesty International, its accomplishments, agonies, obligations, fears, opportunities, and challenges—or, more broadly, in how humanitarian organizations accommodate the moral passions that energize volunteers and professional staff alike.

"Hopgood has done the organization, the global human rights movement, and other stakeholders and important service by getting inside Amnesty and revealing its internal culture. For movement insiders, Hopgood's book provides . . . insight into what holds the movement together as well as what tends to divide it. For outsiders, his book offers a penetrating portrait of an improbably but indispensable organization." *Human Rights Quarterly*

"Hopgood's unique study of Amnesty International is a welcome contribution from a political scientist with anthropological instincts, and it is likely to become a classic in the field. Hopgood immersed himself for over a year in Amnesty's culture, rituals, and politics, and then interpreted this data with insights from Emile Durkheim and Pierre Bourdieu. He writes clearly and well, and his interpretations should appeal to students of transnational organizing, human rights, and international affairs, broadly conceived. . . . For students of international organizations, one of the book's most intriguing elements is the author's representation of the Amnesty employee experience. . . . As Hopgood's book makes abundantly clear, it is devilishly difficult to build a representative, transnational movement for justice, even with the best of intentions." *Perspectives on Politics*

"Hopgood spent a year in Amnesty's International London headquarters, the International Secretariat, interviewing staff and researching the inevitable bureaucratic and philosophical challenges facing the well-known humanitarian organization. This is an interesting, ambitious, and lucid critique of the International Secretariat." *Choice*

"This is a remarkable book. A fascinating and sensitive account of Amnesty International's organizational development, it is also a penetrating reflection on the practice and practices of moral and political authority, of the 'commodification of moral concern under globalization,' and of the possibility of universal values. How can AI govern itself, and on what basis does it make choices about its campaigns? How distant is the initial focus on Prisoners of Conscience from the statement that Guantanamo would be the gulag of our time? Throughout the narrative, Stephen Hopgood never lets the reader off the hook, presenting to us the strongest possible arguments for all sides of impossible choices so that by the book's end we are with him in trying to think through our own morality in the face of the quandaries he has opened up for us." Margaret Keck, The Johns Hopkins University

"Stephen Hopgood emerged from a year doing field research at the International Secretariat of Amnesty International with an incredibly insightful, complex, and fascinating interpretation of the organization. There are points of pure brilliance and sparkling insights, especially when he discusses how the tensions between the sacred and profane, moral and political authority, play themselves out in a changing environment." Michael Barnett, author of *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism*

About the Author: Stephen Hopgood is Professor of International Relations, SOAS, University of London. He is the author of *Keepers of the Flame: Understanding Amnesty International* and *The Endtimes of Human Rights*, both from Cornell, and *American Foreign Environmental Policy and the Power of the State*.