



Behind the Glass Wall: Inside the United Nations

Aleksandar Hemon

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On the UN's seventieth anniversary, an unprecedented glimpse into its strange and remarkable inner workings

Before he was invited to become the United Nations' first writer-in-residence, Aleksandar Hemon had a complicated relationship with the institution. The image of the UN was forever tainted by the UN Protection Force's delinquent and disgraceful presence in the Bosnian War. And yet he also understood that "without the UN, without the very idea of it, the crimes against Bosnians couldn't be perceived as crimes against all humanity."

By the time Hemon had finished his residency at the United Nations—he and the Magnum photographer Peter van Agtmael were invited into the iconic New York City headquarters and given unprecedented access to the secretary-general, the General Assembly, and even the Security Council—his relationship with the institution was even more complicated.

In *Behind the Glass Wall*, Hemon shows an essential, modern institution at work, an institution both beautifully driven and profoundly crippled by its noble ideals. But above all he shows an institution made up of cigarette-smoking, gossipy, hungry, angry, lovely, petty, brilliant people committed to the most inspiring of international principles, people who are at least as frustrated as we are by the world's failure to live up to the UN Charter's inarguable goals, people who get up every morning newly determined to achieve nothing less than peace on earth.

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