

**Dr. Nick Posegay**[@NPosegay](#)Aug 16 • 26 tweets • 10 min read • [Read on X](#)[Subscribe](#)[Scrolly](#)[Bookmark](#)[Save as PDF](#)

After 100 days of continuous action, the Cambridge Encampment for Palestine finally closed on Wednesday. This is a thread documenting the incredible things I witnessed there over the last 3 months, in the hope of demystifying the protest for my many colleagues who remain silent.



Cambridge students set up the first tents on the lawn in front of King's College on May 6th (the same day as Oxford's camp), inspired by similar camps at other schools. They stayed on King's Parade in the heart of Cambridge for the next 14 weeks.





Their goal was to pressure University of Cambridge and its constituent colleges to disclose the contents of their investment portfolios, divest from all companies that support Israeli occupation & apartheid, and reinvest that money in protecting at-risk people at the University.



By all accounts, Uni Admin were very upset at the extremely public location the students selected. There is literally no place in Cambridge that gets more foot traffic from tourists, but the land belongs to King's College, and King's said they wouldn't remove the students.



Undergrads and postgrads together managed the planning and logistics of running the camp for the next 14 weeks. They included members of the Cambridge University Palestine Solidarity Society, Cambridge Jews for Justice in Palestine, and other student activist groups.



The University initially refused to negotiate with the students or even acknowledge their demands. Students escalated in Week 2 by occupying the Senate House lawn. If you don't know, that's where Cambridge has graduation ceremonies, and it was just 2 days before graduation.



The plan worked. Admin agreed to negotiate if the students vacated the Senate House before graduation. The students left and elected a team of negotiators. They met with the vice-chancellor and other high-ranking administrators twice a week for the next two months.

In the meantime, students had to maintain the camp to keep the pressure up while negotiators did their job. This meant securing the camp 24/7, constantly acquiring food, water, and other supplies, and building relationships with the public.

There were two groups helping to keep people safe. One was the Camp Stewards - made up of students, alumni, and local allies - who trained to answer questions about the camp and de-escalate sticky situations. Camp residents may have seen stewards wearing hi-vis on King's Parade.

The other group was the Staff & Faculty Observers, made up of around 60 members of the University committed to publicly supporting all of our students' safety and their rights to free expression. I joined the camp as a Staff Observer in Week 2.

Stewards stood in front of the camp and deflected negative attention 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, for 100 days. This was necessary, as it was 100 days of harassment and verbal abuse from angry, misinformed people, particularly targeted at Muslim students and students of colour.



Other passersby often shouted or shook tents late at night to make sure people couldn't sleep, and one man injured a student by flipping a wooden pallet onto a tent. I was also physically assaulted by a man unaffiliated with the camp.

But far outnumbering the negative responses, the people of Cambridge showed overwhelming support and solidarity. They donated more supplies than the camp could ever use. We regularly offered food, water, and blankets to anyone who stopped by and said they needed help.

The camp became a hub for communal aid, but also rallies, workshops, and celebrations of Palestinian culture. Just a few of the things that happened - there were chess tournaments, Palestinian cooking classes, and a highly attended herbalism workshop, all open to the public.



It was also a highly interfaith space, including Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, and non-religious campers. I took these two videos about 6 hours apart during a Friday shift, one just before Jumu'a prayers and the other during the camp's Shabbat service.





Negotiations continued as the weather turned against the camp. It rained so much in June that the entire space became swamplike. Students used wooden pallets to construct bridges between tents and stewards shivered beneath umbrellas for hours.

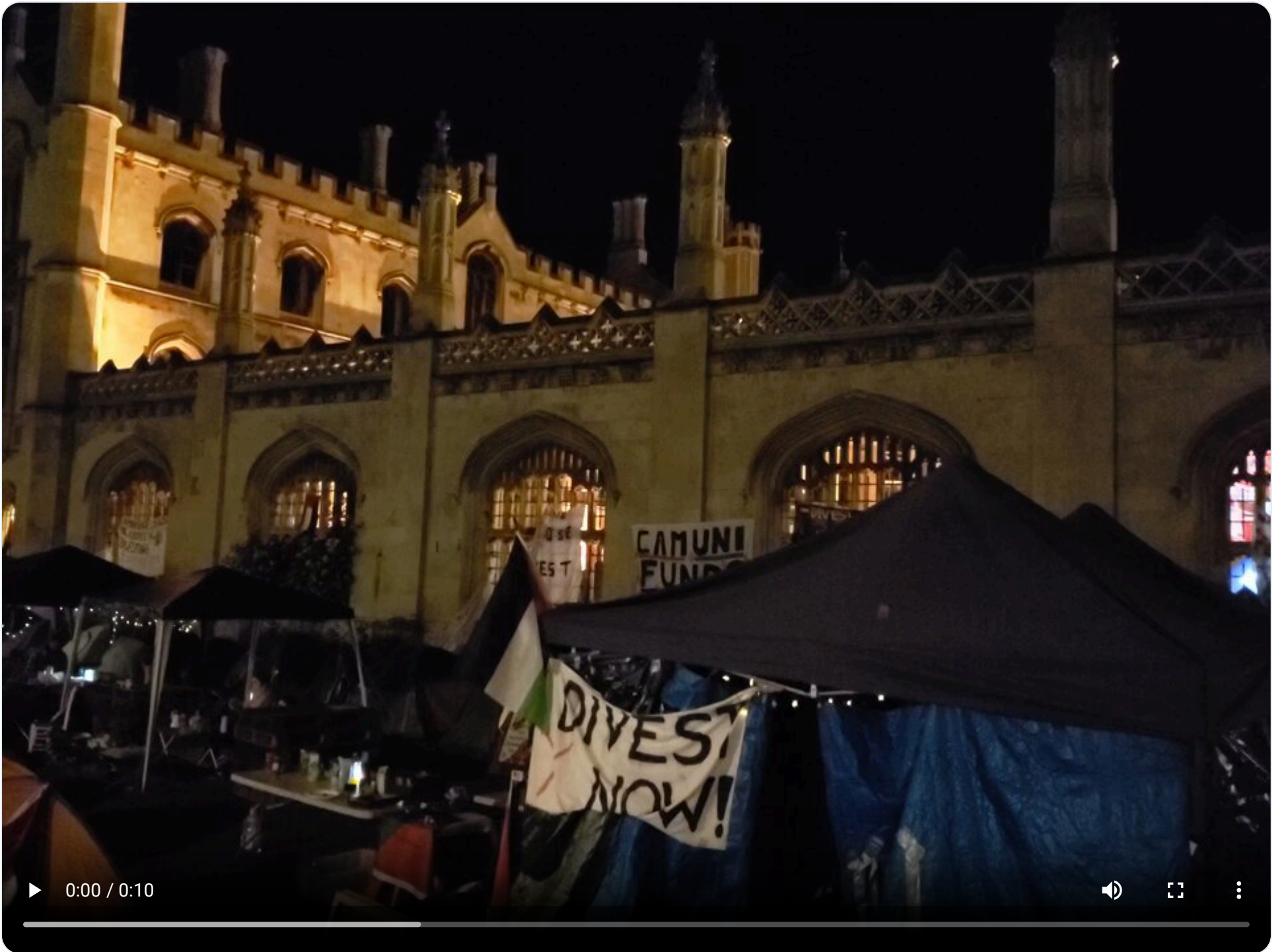


Students huddled inside soaking tents while studying for the end of term, taking it in shifts to manage the waterlogged camp between exams. At least one postgrad submitted his PhD thesis from King's Parade before immediately picking up a flag and joining a rally.



The end of term also brought Cambridge May Week, a week in June that celebrates the opulence and wasteful parties that can only be found at Oxbridge. King's College hosted a ferris wheel and 6-hour drunken dance party at ~£150 per ticket. We didn't sleep that night.







Most other encampments in the UK closed as students went home for the summer. Oxford was cracking down on their camp, but Cambridge decided it was too important give up when they could provide an alternative, non-violent model for other Unis thinking about negotiating.

As undergrads left, postgrads and alumni took on greater responsibilities and reorganised a new (fully waterproofed) Camp 2.0 - also known as Summer Camp. This required extraordinary effort from a handful of individuals who, frankly, saved the entire camp over one weekend in June







Only a few Staff Observers - exclusively fixed-term, insecure postdocs - continued helping. I have to admit that I am quite disappointed by all the tenured professors who wouldn't stand with us. But you rarely get to be a Cambridge professor by being brave.

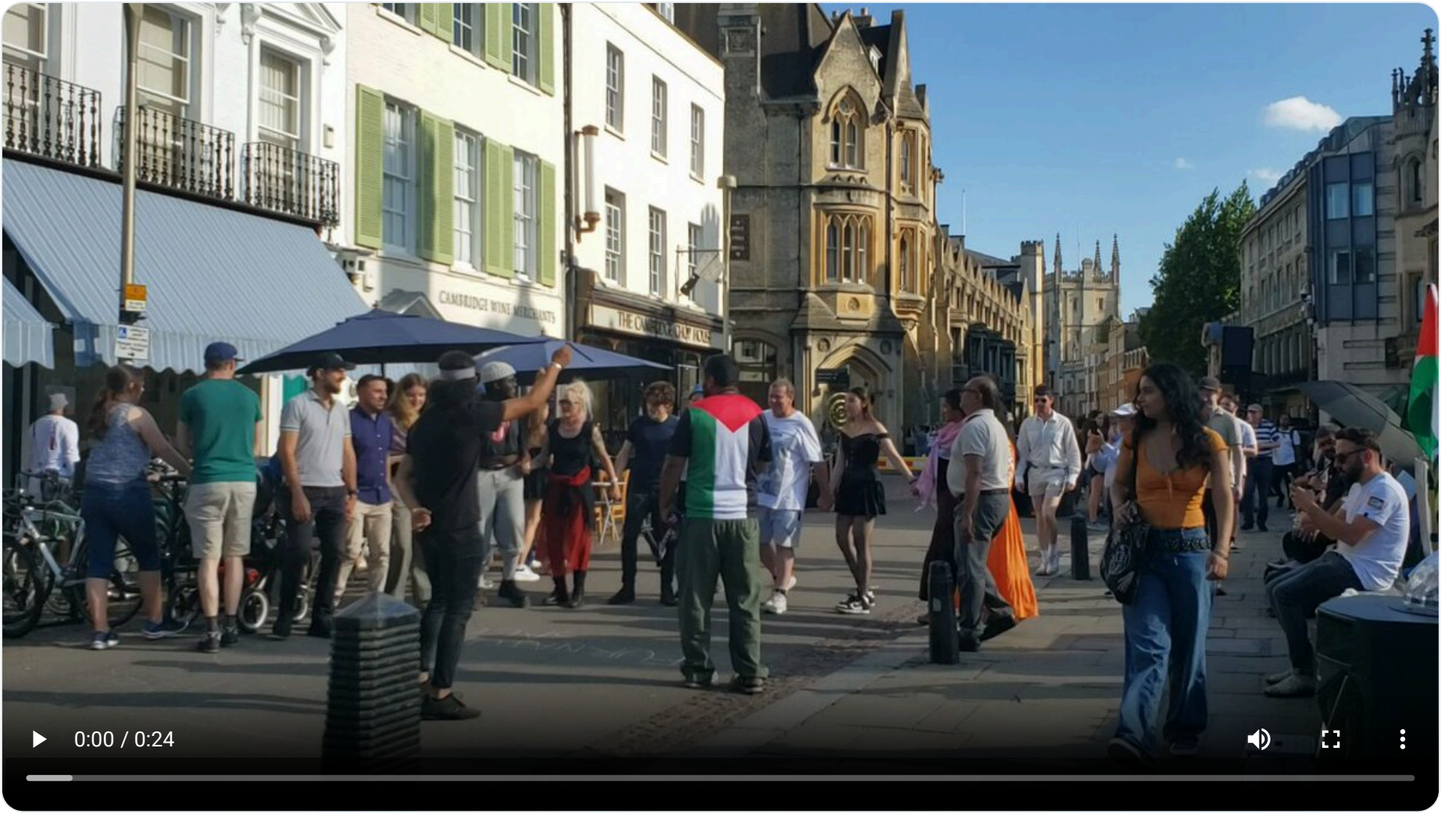
In late July, negotiators finally reached an agreement. The headline is that, in exchange for the camp closing, the Uni will create a working group with a task force of students to review their investment strategy until both sides are happy with it.



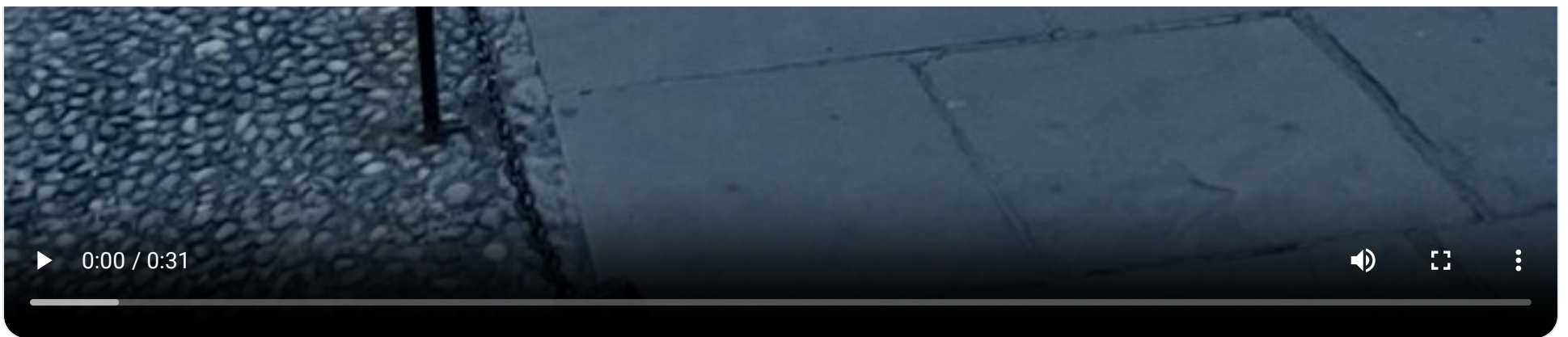
<https://www.cam.ac.uk/notices/news/upholding-our-values-responding-to-calls-from-our-university-community>

The camp agreed and enacted their so-called Last Dance protocol, which boiled down to a massive communal gathering, yard sale, bake sale, dance party, and final rally over the course of two days. That all ended on Tuesday, Day 100 of the encampment.









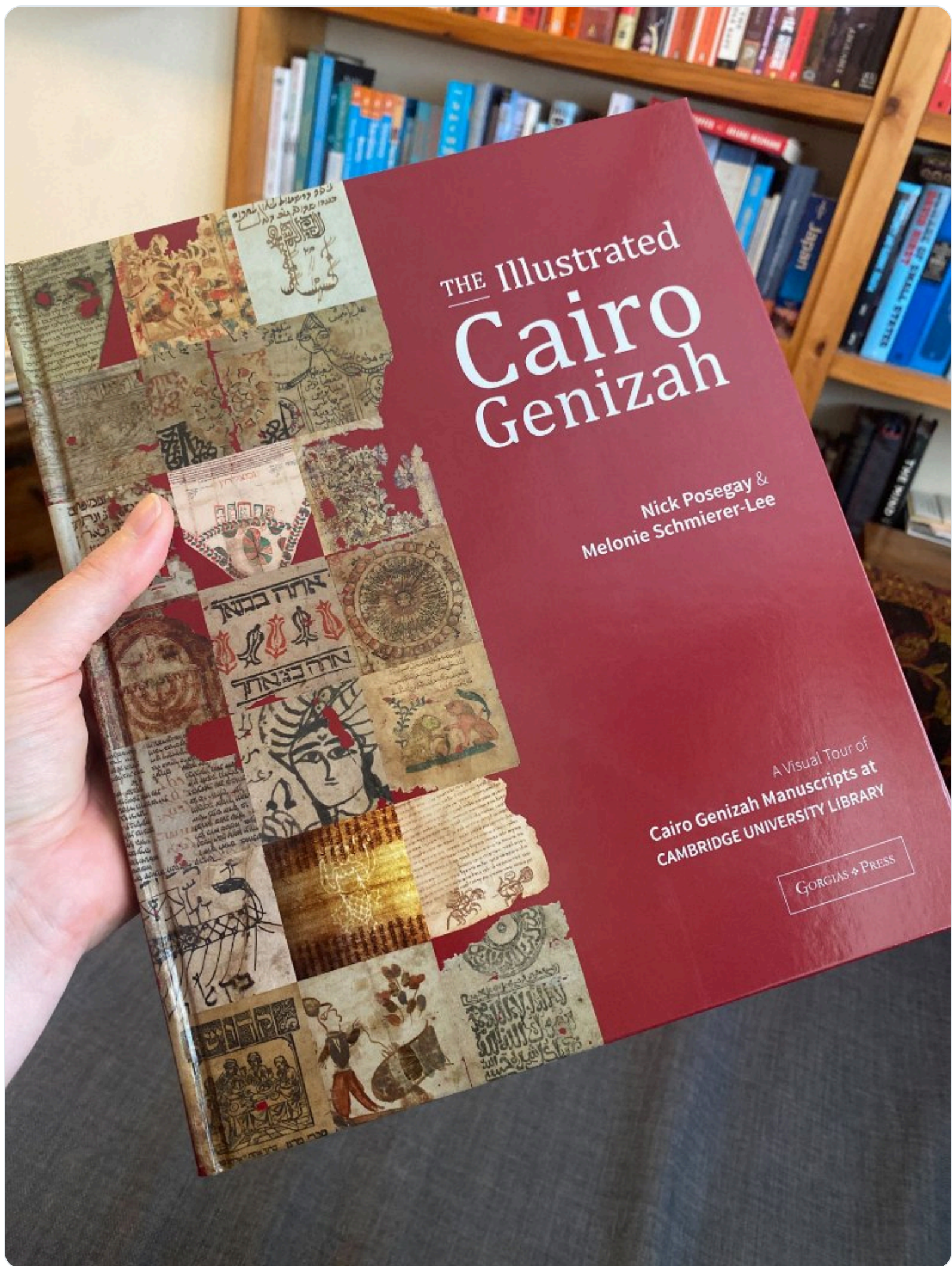
So the camp closed and the ball is in the Uni's court. We created a mechanism for divestment that did not exist before in their ancient bureaucracy, and I am hopeful that they will follow through. If they waver, I know the people of Cambridge will hold their feet to the fire.



FINAL CAMP STATS:

- 100 days
- 6,000(ish) steward volunteer hours
- 0 altercations with police
- 1 assault (hi, yes, I was assaulted and this comment is to make my silent colleagues feel guilty. Do something.)
- 2400 student, staff, & alumni signatures on open letter supporting camp

I am blown away by the amount of support for this thread. I want to add now that in a planned move **completely unrelated to my actions in the camp**, Cambridge will make me redundant in 2 weeks. If you want to support me, I have a new book coming out: linktr.ee/nposegay



NPosegay
*/nposegay

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Itinerant scholar, mildly associated with Cambridge University Library.

<http://linktr.ee/nposegay>

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