

Letters to the Editor



Yemen famine fear

Sir, Yesterday the UN declared that three million more people have plunged to the brink of famine in Yemen. Two thirds of the Yemeni population, more than 17 million people, are being starved to death by conflict. Mere statistics cannot capture the full horror: thousands of families have only days before food and wheat supplies run out at the end of the month. This situation can no longer be solved by the £100 million of humanitarian aid that the UK has promised. Yemen needs to import 250,000 tonnes of grain a month for its people to have some daily bread. Three things are necessary to make that happen. First, the UK must demand an immediate ceasefire, and safety and access guarantees for the crucial port of Hodeida. Second, the Saudi-led coalition must stop blocking the port's four cranes that the UN has ready to be installed. Third, we must support the International Finance Corporation's plans to manage the central bank so that commercial traders can import food supplies.

The use of British arms to bomb Yemeni civilians has dented the UK's global credibility, but it is not too late to demonstrate leadership and help avoid further catastrophe. The UK is president of the UN Security Council, and thus can still help to release the stranglehold on Yemen.

FRANCES GUY, former ambassador to Yemen, JAMES FIREBRACE, PHILIP HOLIHEAD, on behalf of the Yemen Safe Passage Group