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letters@thetimes.co.uk or by post to  
1 London Bridge Street, London SE1 9GF

28

## Letters to the Editor



### Politics of Yemen

Sir, We strongly disagree with Peter Welby's comparison of the Houthis to Isis (Thunderer, June 25). They are Yemeni nationalists whose horizons are confined to Yemen, with no wider proselytising aims. They are motivated by opposition to Saudi interventions in their country, including Saudi promotion of militant Salafism in their home areas.

We also disagree with Welby's military analysis. The battle over the port of Hodeidah will not end the war or prevent the Houthis obtaining arms. None has been shown to come through Hodeidah but rather by overland routes. The bulk of the terrible suffering wrought on Yemenis has been from aerial bombardment by the Saudi-led coalition, and its blockades of ports. The Houthis are also guilty of serious abuses, but they have none of the air and naval capacity that delivers the coalition's systematic tactic of mass starvation and destruction of livelihoods.

Yemen is on the brink of catastrophe. Our government now needs to apply its considerable leverage to halt the fighting and promote negotiations for a sustainable and inclusive peace. Welby's comments are particularly unfortunate at this critical juncture, when the UN special envoy is striving to mediate between opposing forces and avert famine.

PROFESSOR MARTHA MUNDY, LSE; DR SHELAGH WEIR, author on tribal politics; DR GABRIELE VOM BRUCK, SOAS; DR ELISABETH KENDALL, Oxford University; HELEN LACKNER, author *Yemen in Crisis*; PROFESSOR NORA COLTON, UCL; DR MIRANDA MORRIS, St Andrews University; CHRISTOPHER WARD, Exeter University; JAMES FIREBRACE, Yemen Safe Passage Group