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The stripping of French citizenship is not new

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Sir, James Blitz is spot on when he describes France's new law on terrorists and nationality as "an ill-judged waste of political capital, something [François] Hollande can hardly afford" (February 12). It is worth noting the exact context in which Emmanuel Macron, the economy minister, said that he "felt philosophically uncomfortable" with them — it was a debate at the Fondation France Israel.

Many in France cannot forget that the Vichy government enacted three laws in July and October 1940 that stripped thousands of the country's citizens of their nationality. Some were supporters of General De Gaulle who had joined him in London but the majority were Jews, not least 110,000 in Algeria. Such well-known names as Ève Curie, Jacques Derrida, Marc Chagall and Serge Gainsbourg suffered this indignity.

In Algeria, the Jews reverted to the status of *indigènes*, which they shared with millions of Muslims. The latter mostly welcomed their Jewish neighbours in a country where virulent anti-Semitism had been a feature of life throughout the 1930s. Circumstances today cannot be compared with those of 1940 but the irony is not lost on those who remember history — we have the French national assembly, Jews and Muslims.

Some argue that Mr Macron was trying to score a political point but his reference to philosophy suggests otherwise. His views are more widely shared in France, across the political spectrum, than may at first appear.

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