

# Abreschviller: The cold case of "the woman in the barrel" solved

**Twenty-six years after her death in Moselle, a woman found in a barrel has been identified thanks to the Nanterre cold-case unit. Her husband has been charged with murder and placed under judicial supervision.**

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She was identified twenty-six years after her death. The Nanterre [cold case](#) unit solved the mystery of "the woman in the barrel," one of the most enigmatic unsolved cases in the Moselle region. It all began on January 7, 2005, when the mayor of Abreschviller discovered a bag containing human remains, including part of a woman's legs, by the side of a departmental road. In a plastic barrel located nearby, investigators found the woman's upper body. Her torso was covered with a pink tank top and a red bra.

## Case dismissed in 2009

According to the autopsy, the victim was a woman of approximately 35 years old, about 1.60 meters tall, whose face had been completely crushed. As a result, she could not be identified. No missing persons were reported in the area, and for years the case remained unsolved. Nevertheless, investigators intensified their efforts to identify her. They discovered that her tank top had been sold in 90 Eurodif stores across France starting in the summer of 2003. Each buyer was contacted: they were all still in possession of the garment. The same was true for identifying her bra, which also failed to lead them to the victim. The barrel was also examined, without success. Investigators even went so far as to contact 3,500 dentists after noticing that the victim was wearing a temporary bridge. No avenue led to the woman's identity. The case was dismissed in October 2009.

## Her husband was charged

It was ultimately with the takeover of the case by the Nanterre cold-case unit that the investigation took a decisive turn. Investigators from the [Metz](#) research section reopened the evidence in July 2023 and examined the victim's DNA. Her genetic profile was completed, and a familial DNA search led them to the victim's son. She was finally identified as [Hakima](#). Born in 1970 in Algeria, she had disappeared. With this new

evidence, a judicial inquiry was opened in February 2025. The investigation revealed that, shortly before the body was discovered, Hakima had had a disagreement with her husband. He had kicked her out, and she had returned to live with her parents. The 77-year-old man was taken into custody in June 2025. He recounted being assaulted by his wife in late 2004 and that, to punish her, he had asked a Roma man to give her a beating. He had not heard from his wife since. When questioned about the Roma man's name, he stated that he did not know his exact identity. Hakima's husband was charged with murder and imprisoned. He was released under judicial supervision for health reasons.