

## France 'holds Europe jewel thief'

**A woman and her son have been arrested in northern France in connection with the theft of hundreds of thousands of euros worth of jewellery across Europe.**

Police said they had placed them under formal investigation for the theft of a 5.5-carat diamond ring worth 635,000 euros (£574,000) in Paris in November.

Posing as a wealthy Muslim woman from Qatar and wearing a headscarf, the thief swapped the ring for a replica.

Jewellers in Germany, Switzerland and the UK have been similarly targeted.

German police are also linking the perpetrator to thefts from hotels in Germany and Switzerland over a 10-year period.

### 'Missing rings found'

The 55-year-old French woman and her 40-year-old son were arrested last Friday in the northern French town of Roubaix and placed under investigation on suspicion of involvement in the November theft, the AFP news agency reported.

In the incident, a woman in a headscarf and wearing gold-rimmed glasses, who said she was a tourist from the Middle East and was accompanied by a younger man, visited the Cartier store in Paris and asked to see a number of rings.

While inspecting the goods, the woman swapped the 5.5-carat diamond ring with a replica. Only after she left did staff realise what had happened.

Police told AFP that while being questioned, the pair had admitted to the theft, and that during searches in their hotel room in Roubaix, investigators had found two rings, also stolen in Paris on the same day, but not the 5.5-carat ring, which they said had been sold.

The woman also admitted a similar theft from a jewellers in Frankfurt, Germany, and the son to an offence in Valencia, Spain, last week, the police added.

The theft of a 210,000 euro (£189,000) ring from Tiffany's in Frankfurt, using the same method to that used in Paris, brought the suspect to international attention.

Following a BBC News website story last month, experts also linked her to the theft of a £120,000 ring in London.

At Abrahams jewellers in Hatton Garden, staff were distracted and later discovered that the ring had vanished.

The French newspaper Le Figaro dubbed the thief one of Europe's "high magicians" of crime, while the Internationaler Juwelier-Warndienst - a crime prevention network for the European jewellery businesses - described her as "the best shoplifter today".

Story from BBC NEWS:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/europe/7926152.stm>

Published: 2009/03/05 13:08:40 GMT

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