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# Nerve Gas Expert on Syrian Attack

## 'You Can't Fake These Symptoms'

**With images of screaming victims and numerous dead children, the shocking videos from Syria apparently show the consequences of a nerve agent attack there this week. Swiss expert Stefan Mogl explains the symptoms that can be seen in the images.**

**SPIEGEL:** Mr. Mogl, since Wednesday morning, you have examined several dozen videos of the [alleged chemical weapons attack in Syria](#).

**Mogl:** Yes, and I had never seen such a thing from Syria. They are totally different from the few images and videos from March, April and July. The sheer number of victims with clearly visible and various symptoms is very worrying.

**SPIEGEL:** What symptoms can be identified?

**Mogl:** They begin with miosis, a constriction of the pupil, that several victims can be seen to be suffering from, even a child that is lying in almost complete darkness. Miosis is considered to be the first symptom of nerve gas. But then we can see how people get muscle cramps in different parts of their body. With others, their entire bodies are trembling, displaying so-called tremors.

**SPIEGEL:** What does it mean that many of the victims appear to be foaming at the mouth?

**Mogl:** That is a further consequence of nerve gas. Tear and saliva glands as well as nasal secretions are terribly over-stimulated. That all comes together and almost looks like foam in front of their mouths.

**SPIEGEL:** What happens inside the body when it comes into contact with nerve gas?

**Mogl:** Nerve gas inhibits an enzyme, the acetylcholinesterase, which means that neurotransmitters are no longer slowed and all muscles and organs are completely over-stimulated until the organism collapses. That makes itself apparent in exactly the symptoms that can be seen in the videos. And that is what makes it so alarming.

**SPIEGEL:** How can you be so sure?

**Mogl:** A miosis can be triggered using eye drops, but it is not easy to simulate trembling of the entire body. And many of the victims are children. You can't fake all these symptoms with them.

**SPIEGEL:** The fact that all the videos were uploaded on Wednesday morning has been proven. But it can't be proven without a doubt that they were all made on Wednesday morning. How else would one be able to explain such symptoms being suffered by so many different people?

**Mogl:** That would be extremely difficult. For me, the combination of the symptoms indicates a nerve agent. Were such symptoms described to me or our team, we would certainly take measures to completely protect ourselves if we had to go to these places.

**SPIEGEL:** Yet in the videos, one sees hospital personnel with almost no protection at all.

**Mogl:** It is good that the helpers continually poured water on the victims, but that is completely insufficient. The probability is great that the hospital workers were likewise contaminated.

*Interview conducted by Christoph Reuter*