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Actor with HIV finally allowed to enter Philippines

MANILA: The Philippine immigration chief said yesterday he has rescinded an order barring a movie and theatre actor who is HIV-positive from entering the country, calling it a mistake and violation of the government's international commitments.

Filipino-Australian actor Marcelino Cavestany said he was shocked when immigration officers at Manila airport stopped him upon arrival from Australia on Sunday because he was on a blacklist.

Cavestany said that he had been living with HIV for the past 12 years and had been an activist since 2006, using theatre to promote AIDS awareness among Filipinos.

The Philippine Commission on Human Rights said yesterday it was "dismayed and deeply alarmed" by the blacklisting. It said it was "unacceptable and illegal" citing a 1998 Philippine law that guarantees HIV positive individuals freedom to travel.

"Ironically, Cavestany had intended to travel to the Philippines to help educate Filipinos on the effects of AIDS," the commission said.

Immigration Commissioner Ronaldo Ledesma said Cavestany's inclusion on the list was a violation of the Philippines' international commitment to allow freedom of travel of persons infected with HIV/AIDS.

Ledesma said Cavestany was free to enter and leave the country, and his name was expunged from the list on Tuesday. — AP



Marcelino Cavestany