

Russian Actor Says Ebola Victims Reanimating as Zombies

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Ivan Okhlobystin (left) in the sitcom "Interny."

A notoriously outspoken Russian actor and former Orthodox priest who suggested last week that Ebola victims were coming back from the dead as zombies has been banned from entering Latvia over earlier incendiary comments he made about gay people.

Latvia's Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkevics tweeted Friday night that Ivan Okhlobystin — who was due to give a one-man show about religion in Riga on Nov. 7 — would not be allowed to enter the country because of remarks deemed to constitute ethnic hatred. Rinkevics later added that the entry ban was based on the actor's offensive statements about the LGBT community.

In December 2013, Okhlobystin said that all homosexuals should be burned alive because they represent a "living danger" to his children. In January, he addressed an open letter to President Vladimir Putin, requesting the return of a Soviet-era law on the criminalization

of homosexuality.

Okhlobystin, who served as a Russian Orthodox priest before being suspended from the Church at his own request in 2010, is notorious for his vocal intolerance of Russia's LGBT community and his provocative statements on other topics.

Last week he suggested that some victims of the Ebola virus were turning into zombies, explaining that he had heard of many cases in which those who died from the virus were mysteriously resurrected several days later. In case there was any doubt, the actor added that he "was not joking" and that he had purchased a crossbow, "just in case."

While a number of Latvian politicians endorsed Rinkevics' decision to ban the Russian actor from the country, the former Soviet nation's pro-Russian political factions were quick to condemn it. Riga's Mayor Nils Usakovs, whose party fosters ties with Russia's ruling United Russia party, directed a tweet to Okhlobystin on Friday, saying that although he disagrees with many of the actor's public statements, he felt "very ashamed" for Rinkevics.

In July, Latvia denied entry to Russian pop stars Iosif Kobzon, Oleg Gazmanov and Valeriya for "words and actions" that undermined Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The three performers — who were all signatories of a letter supporting the Kremlin's position on Ukraine and Crimea — were set to take part in the annual new-wave music festival in the seaside resort town of Jurmala.

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