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RT Chief Simonyan May Step Down After Alleged Cancer Diagnosis, Source Says

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Margarita Simonyan. **Sergei Yelagin / Business Online / TASS**

Margarita Simonyan may step down as editor-in-chief of the Kremlin-funded broadcaster RT after allegedly being diagnosed with breast cancer, a source close to the network told the Russian service of The Moscow Times on Monday.

Simonyan said on Sunday that she had been diagnosed with a "terrible and serious" illness last week and was scheduled to undergo surgery on Monday.

She did not name the illness but hinted that it could involve a mastectomy, the surgical removal of part or all of the breast that is usually carried out to treat breast cancer.

"The surgery will take place right under this award," Simonyan said on state television, gesturing toward a medal pinned to her chest.

A source close to RT, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that Simonyan had been diagnosed with cancer and faced "very serious health problems." The person said discussions

were underway over whether she could remain in her post, though no decision had been made.

Simonyan has led RT since its founding in 2005 and was later appointed editor-in-chief of Rossiya Segodnya, the state media conglomerate that also oversees the Sputnik news agency. Both outlets, along with Simonyan herself, are under U.S. and European sanctions.

Her husband, the filmmaker and television host Tigran Keosayan, has been in a coma for the past nine months.

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