



The retail and entertainment sectors' revenues drop amid protests.

## Retail incomes shrink in ongoing unrest

Demet Cengiz - İSTANBUL / Hürriyet

The retail and entertainment sectors say they have suffered significant losses - varying between 30 to 90 percent - in their revenue due to the countrywide demonstrations.

As some people rush to the main parks and squares in their city to support the Gezi Park protestors, others have stayed at home to watch events on screen. This has led to retail stores, cinemas and restaurants suffering from a significant drop in custom.

"There is no spirit, how can there be shopping," says Tahsin Özlenir, chairman of Turkey's Registered Brands Association (TMD). "The latest information we have received shows that revenues across Turkey have plummeted by around 30 percent."

However, 30 percent is the most optimistic of countrywide falls, Özlenir added. "In demonstration centers, like Beyoğlu, losses have reached 80 to 90 percent," he said.

Beyoğlu, where Taksim Square is located, is the main entertainment and arts center of Istanbul, and is now hosting a different kind of crowd.

Many shops in İstiklal Avenue, which now has windows and walls filled with anti-government slogans, have been closed for days.

### 'Not only Beyoğlu, also other shopping centers'

However, Özlenir underlines that this does not only pertain to Beyoğlu, but other main shopping and entertainment centers of Istanbul such as Nişantaşı and Anatolian side hubs such as Bağdat Avenue and Kadıköy, as well as whole shopping malls across the country.

"There can't be shopping in this environment. There are a few people who shop because of necessity. The ones who shop for pleasure won't do that under these circumstances," he said.

Shopping Mall Investors Association (AYD) Chairman Hulusi Bengü said that in two of Istanbul's largest shopping malls, Forum Istanbul and Marmara Forum, the fall registered was between 25 and 30 percent over the last weekend.

In addition to shopping stores, restaurants, bars and cafes are affected by the protests, which are now continuing into their eleventh day.

The sector hit hardest seems likely to be the cinema sector according to leading sector figures. Muzaffer Yıldırım, the CEO of Mars Entertainment, the owner of Turkey's largest theatre chain Cinemaximum, says the cinema audience figures have decreased by around 70 percent since the beginning of demonstrations. Yıldırım adds that this is an average for across the whole of Turkey, so in some theatres the drop is much higher.

"The audience of cinema is generally the youth, and they are now in the parks," Özlenir said.