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80 hawkers hit out at heavier fines

MORE than 80 hawkers fined for breaching their licence terms petitioned Government House yesterday over what they considered unreasonable arrests and penalties.

The Tsim Sha Tsui hawkers were arrested for obstructing roadways. Some have been arrested several times and fined up to \$2,000.

A group representative, Mr Leung Kiu-shut, said fines of thousands of dollars were too high compared with the average of less than \$200.

Mr Leung said more than 90 percent of Tsim Sha Tsui hawkers had stopped doing business because of the "threatening fines" and frequent arrests.

Most are angered about the so-called unreasonable arrests.

"Whenever we ask why we are being arrested, the General Duties Teams only say we have blocked the road, and nothing else. We demanded sound reasons and a redefinition of illegal hawking," Mr Leung said.

An Urban Service Department (USD) spokesman said the hawkers were arrested for failing to comply with licence regulations which forbade their doing business at fixed locations.

The group is scheduled to hold a meeting with the USD next week.