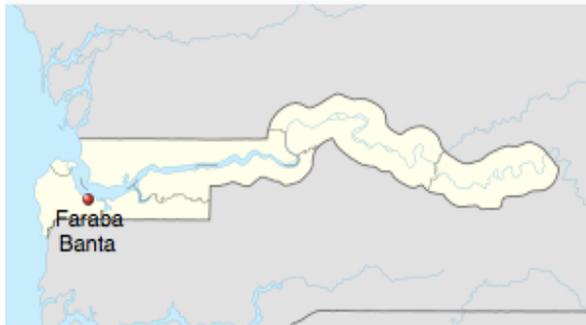


## As the Police Clashed with Protesters in Faraba Banta: 2 Killed and Dozens Injured



Map of The Gambia showing Faraba Banta  
Credit: Google Map 2018

### Demographic Analysis

- Faraba Banta is found in Kombo East District in the West Coast Region of the Gambia and about 51km away from the capital City, Banjul.
- West Coast Region comprises 9 Districts with a population size of 688,744, of which 344,631 are females and 344,123 males.
- It is a mixed community with mainly Mandinka, Fula and Jola people.

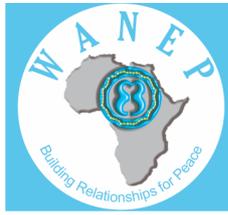
### INCIDENT PROFILE

According to a press statement issued on June 18, 2018 from the Office of the Inspector General of Police, at least 2 people have been confirmed dead and several others injured in a clash between residents of Faraba Banta and the Gambia Police Force. The dead include Bakary Kujabi and Ismaila Bah, while among the injured were 6 Police Officers from the Police Intervention Unit (PIU) and a child of approximately 13 years old. The incident happened after Police opened fire on a crowd of unarmed protesters who were concerned about sand mining activities by Julakay Engineering and Construction Company in their community. It was reported that the mining company was granted licenses to operate closer to their rice fields which they perceived to be counterproductive not only to crop production but also exposed them to environmental dangers. These concerns prompted the street protest. It was alleged that the houses of the former chief and the Alkalo were attacked and destroyed by the angry protesters who claimed the latter facilitated the sale of the sand mine area.

According to some reports, the company claimed to have the consent of the village Alkalo and some members of the Village Development Committee (VDC) to start operations, while others allege that the Alkalo gave the approval without the consent of the VDC or the villagers<sup>1</sup>.

On the back of the protest, the community also claimed that decisions reached at various consultations with the National Environment Agency and other stakeholders have not been adhered to and that the mining operations have destroyed the village football field, private/reserved plots of land and palm trees.

<sup>1</sup> <http://foroyaa.gm/villagers-of-faraba-banta-protest-against-sand-mining/>



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## ANALYSIS

The recurrence of disputes over the exploration of natural resources is not uncommon in the West Coast Region. However, the recent spate and intensity of violent conflicts over land and the environment in the region is worrisome. A case in point is the death of 2 unarmed civilians and several others injured while peacefully expressing legitimate concerns about their community resources and the environment. The incident continues to raise questions about the ability and professionalism of the state security institutions to correct the wrongs of the past and the readiness to rewrite a new chapter in the country's respect and protection of human rights records. Even though the Gambia Police high-command has unequivocally condemned the excesses of the personnel on the operation, persistent use of disproportionate force by officers has become the first option to manage civilian protests and demonstrations in the country. This must be condemned in no uncertain terms and a public hearing of the investigations in to the crime is encouraged to douse tensions and prevent reprisals.

Another lesson to learn from this incident is the need for open governance at all levels to building public trust. The local authorities and central government should ensure unhindered information sharing on development programmes in every sector, while communities must also seek to resolve their grievances through dialogue, negotiation and respect for the Rule of Law. It is also vital for corporate mining agreements to be appropriately aligned with the community development strategies as well as an equitable distribution and management of natural resources to reduce community based conflicts. Finally, the Government through the relevant ministries and partners should, as a matter of urgency, intervene to resolve the standoff between the company and the residents of Faraba Banta community.

## MECHANISM FOR INTERVENTION

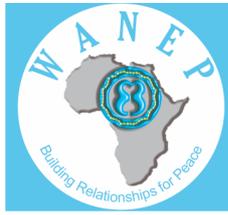
The Office of the Inspector General of Police has launched an investigation into the use of fire arms and promised appropriate actions will be taken against the culprits<sup>2</sup>. The WANEP National Early Warning System (NEWS) structure will continue to monitor the situation with keen interest and provide updates as the issues unfold.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Gambia Police and the Ministry of Interior should expedite investigations into violent confrontation and the use of fire arms on unarmed civilians to bring the culprits to book;

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<sup>2</sup> <http://fatunetwork.net/office-of-the-igp-says-it-did-not-authorize-the-use-of-fire-arms/>



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- The Government should ensure the engagement and inclusion of local communities in natural resource management and address environmental issues to prevent and mitigate destructive conflicts and natural disasters;
- The Government through the Ministry of Interior and development partners should conduct more training for the security forces, especially the PIU and para-military in civil-police/military relationships and human rights;
- The Civil Society Organisations, particularly human rights focused groups should assist families of the victims and survivors with pro bono legal assistance to seek justice and reparation;
- A Land Commission should be established to address land issues and advice government on appropriate measures needed to solve land related conflicts;
- The establishment of the Human Rights Commission should be expedited.