

The observers visiting the First Division area were briefed by the General Staff Officer I in the absence of the GOC who was in Lagos. He confirmed that there were newly liberated areas in the Afikpo and Okigwi sectors and the observers requested to visit them. In the Okigwi sector this area is astride the Okigwi-Umuahia road and west to the Imo River. The GS01 advised the observers that refugees were emerging from the bush in large numbers.

Genocide

The observers neither saw nor heard of any evidence of genocide in the newly liberated areas visited.

Refugees

The observers saw refugees at Aba, Mbawsi, Okpuala, Umudiki, Obiakibi and Owerri. With the exception of those in Owerri and environment, they appeared to be in good physical shape. This was confirmed in conversation with a member of the U.S. Aid relief detachment in Aba and by a doctor in Umudiki.

Refugees seen in Owerri and walking down the Owerri-Aba road were not in such good physical condition. There were signs of malnutrition amongst some of the children, but not extreme.

In Aba and Umuahia traders were operating. In Aba there were signs that the town is being energetically cleaned up by communal labour of the refugees who continue to pour in by tens of thousands.

Refugees were being screened cursorily. It appeared that men of military age were being detained for further interrogation to determine whether they were POWs or Biafran Organisation of Freedom Fighters (BOFFs).

Within the limitations of available transport, federal troops are carrying food where it is most needed and refugees whenever possible. As operational requirements decrease, much needed transport will become available for civilian use.

At Umudike, where 30,000 refugees are temporarily housed, the food was meagre although the refugees still appear fit and well.