

# Testimony - Morocco

## Fawziyya Ben Taleb

I start by asking a question I have always been asking, which is how to talk about a feeling that is deeper and stronger than any words can express, the feeling of being disabled and that is often aggravated by society which is incapable of accepting a disabled person and have him/her lead a normal life like anyone else?

I was born with deficient sight and spent seven years in hospitals and with doctors to no avail. Finally I was convinced that I had to live my life and accept that this was my fate. When I reached schooling age I found a school for non-disabled children but could not adjust to their methods of teaching, so the doctor advised me to study in a school for the blind. But since I was very young I was not fully aware of all that was going on around me. I entered a boarding school and felt very scared because I had left my family and was with people I did not know. Everything looked strange to me: the people, the methods of reading and writing... Thus my life followed a path that differed from what I had imagined and I found it difficult to adapt. However, in the end I accepted reality and submitted to my fate, otherwise I would have lived with a constant interior conflict.

I went through the elementary, intermediate and high school classes in this school then went on to university where I studied law. In the university I faced another world and other difficulties because I had to search constantly for someone to read and write for me. This was a great burden on me and limited my possibilities. But in spite of these obstacles I managed to succeed in obtaining my degree from law school in International Law. As the poet says: "It is not hope but struggle that makes us attain our aims."

My disability affected my studies. I had wished to study science, but that is impossible for a blind person. My disability also affected my social life since it is difficult to find people who appreciate you as a person caring for nothing but your talents and capacity. It also affected my emotional life, for I find that a disabled girl or woman is marginalized in Arab societies, and is not given the position she deserves since society refuses to give her the chance to prove that she can bear responsibility as well as anyone else. I could not accept my life and was not convinced by it, and this made me think of going in for social work in order to help the blind. Although I have not been long in this field it has been a turning point in my life, for being in touch with several issues has made me see that disability is a double-edged weapon. I have to know how to wield it in order to overcome my weakness without allowing it to overcome me. Disability can also be a source of strength by way of challenge and endurance. I also learnt that no one will value the disabled person unless he values himself by having confidence in his capacities, and that he has to fight for his rights for they will never be offered to him on a plate of gold. In the midst of all these challenges there remains the beacon of will power and hope that brightens our life and creates in it the spirit of continuity and giving in order to attain what we strive for. As the saying goes: "How narrow life would have been had there not been hope." This thought enables me to end this short summary of my life, for it is difficult to recount my whole life experience in one article. Therefore I beg the reader to read between the lines more than what has been written in this paper.